

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Ruth Yamaguchi

Ruth Yamaguchi was born January 17, 1927 on the Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead in Wailupe. The family included her nisei father, Wataru Ishibashi, who delivered milk for the dairy; her nisei mother, Susoe Ishibashi; her issei paternal grandmother, Sei Ishibashi; and seven children.

In 1940 her father, through the Farm Security Administration, purchased nine acres of farmland in Pu'uloa and built a large three-bedroom home for his family. They moved there in August of 1941.

Yamaguchi's memories of December 7, 1941 are of bomb blasts, gunshots, black smoke, and airplanes. A couple of weeks later, her father was questioned by military officers who ordered the family off their land before sundown. With her sick infant brother, Yamaguchi and her family sought refuge at the home of friends. Her father was only allowed to retrieve what was stored outside their occupied home. Furniture and other belongings inside were never returned. In 1944 they were told that the evacuation was permanent.

The third oldest child, Yamaguchi attended Wai'ala'e, Lili'uokalani, 'Ewa, and Kaimukī schools. To help her struggling family, she dropped out of the tenth grade to work for the Hawaiian Army Exchange as a salesclerk. She later held various clerical positions at Fort Ruger, Fort DeRussy, Fort Shafter, Hickam Air Force Base, and Kapālama Military Reservation. She married Harry Yamaguchi in 1949. In spite of taking time off to raise her son and daughter, she retired in 1987 with thirty-six years to her credit.

Ruth Yamaguchi is among the 136 former Pu'uloa residents whose applications for redress under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 were approved January 1994 by the U.S. Justice Department-Office of Redress Administration. Each evacuee received \$20,000 and a formal apology for being evicted strictly on the basis of race from a designated strategic area.

Tape Nos. 22-40-1-92 and 22-41-1-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ruth Yamaguchi (RY)

June 19, 1992

Pearl City, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Mitsue Ishibashi Yamaguchi at her home in Pearl City, O'ahu, Hawai'i, on June 19, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, for today's interview we're going to concentrate on your family's lives before the war. So I want you to kind of think back. And we can start talking about your mother. What was your mother's name?

RY: My mother's name at that time was Susoe Ishibashi.

MK: And before she got married she was a. . . .

RY: A Fukuyama.

MK: And when and where was she born?

RY: She was born in 'Ewa, July 1, 1903.

MK: And, after she was born, tell me about her early life with her family.

RY: Well, as I recall my mother talking about it, she [mistakenly] thought she was born in Kōloa, Kaua'i, because she remembers her childhood in Kōloa, Kaua'i. And she had lost her mother when she was very young [RY's grandmother was forty-one years old at the time of her death.]. And evidently her father [Tomosaku Fukuyama] came back [to O'ahu] with her and lived somewhere in Kaka'ako, because she remembers being in this big boardinghouse. And there were other people—she had mentioned some names but I've forgotten who they were now. But she particularly remembered one lady who was very kind to her. Because her father had to go to work, she was left alone most of the time. And when he did come home, she said that he would just feed her and then he would—I guess in those days they used to drink sake, you know, he's gone. So this lady, more or less, watched after her. Then, later on, she told me that her father married this lady. And I think her name was Toyo. I don't know her maiden name, because her mother's name was Tane. Tane Fukuyama. And her stepmother's name was Toyo.

MK: So your mother was raised by her father and stepmother named Toyo.

RY: Yes.

MK: And that was in Kaka'ako.

RY: Yes. But she did also talk about her family. It seems as though her mother told her, when she was small, that in order to come to Hawai'i, trying to better their life, they left Kumamoto[-ken]. And, at that time her parents had one son and two sisters [i.e., daughters]. But because of the unsure conditions that they heard, and thinking that if they did not want to stay here they would go back to Kumamoto, they left those children with relatives, then came to Hawai'i. So out of four children, she was the only one born in Hawai'i. But her mother never got to see the children again because she had died in Kōloa.

So my mother never got to know her brother or sisters until later in life, through friends that had gone back to Japan and brought word back to her. Then they start [to correspond with each other]---now, there was one particular lady, she would write letters for my mother, whatever my mother expressed or wanted to ask. She would take the letter back to Kumamoto to her sisters, and her sisters wrote back again. That's how she got information about the family.

MK: Now, since your mother was raised in Kaka'ako, like how much did she know about Japan or even the Japanese language?

RY: Well, she knew enough Japanese to talk to elderly people. But, of course, her first language was English because she had gone to school, and everything was taught in English. But she did say that she did go to Japanese[-language] school and probably because living in a boardinghouse where most of them spoke Japanese, she learned enough Japanese that she could converse with an elderly person.

MK: And then, in terms of her English schooling, would you know what schools she went to in that area?

RY: Oh. There is a school in Kaka'ako she mentioned. I can't remember the name [Pohukaina School]. But she did say she did go to the schools there. Probably only up to maybe the seventh grade or so.

MK: And so, as a young girl, would you know if she did any work for pay prior to getting married?

RY: Yes. She did mention that she went to---I think she mentioned she did cannery work. Because I know in the later life when she got married, I remember her mentioning that she had gone to the tuna packers [Hawaiian Tuna Packers Ltd., formerly MacFarlane Tuna Company], because she mentioned the smell that was awful. (Chuckles) She could not get over the smell. But I do remember---she might have worked at the cannery even after she got married [in 1921], too---but I do remember her mention how strict they were, you know, in the canneries. And you had to really work fast because the foreladies would come around and check on them.

MK: And when you say "cannery," that would be the pineapple cannery?

RY: Pineapple cannery. Yeah, pineapple cannery. I can't remember her mentioning which

cannery. [Probably, Hawaiian Pineapple Company or California Packing Corporation.] You know, in those days there were a lot of canneries there. But I do remember she did have to go to work.

MK: And what do you know about how your mother and father got together?

RY: Well, she told me that there was a man who mentioned my dad [Wataru Ishibashi], and that they wanted to take her to meet him. And she didn't go into too much detail about it but she said that she did meet up with my dad. So, I take it that it was probably those go-betweens, you know, in those Japanese custom, yeah? But she said that she did meet up with Dad before she got married. And when I asked her, "Well, what did you think about Dad?"

She said, "Oh, your dad was real handsome."

(Laughter)

RY: And I asked her, "What did he say to you?" And she said, oh she can't remember, you know. He didn't say much.

(Laughter)

RY: And I said, "Did you get married right away?" She said no, she said then they met a couple more times, you know. I said, "Was the go-between always with you?"

She said, "Of course there was somebody with you all the time."

(Laughter)

RY: So I take it that even in Hawai'i, they were still strict, you know, the parents were real strict about it. And she remembers that her stepmother was very strict with her. But she thought very highly of her stepmother because even after she got married, and as children I remember going to visit her stepmother in Waipahu. It used to be a treat for us to go there because of the long ride and going there to spend the day. And she was caretaker of a temple, I remember. And so we were able to go around the temples, but she would always take us inside of the temple, you have to pray first, then she would come back. And she always had those goodies.

(Laughter)

RY: Maybe that's why we used to like to go there. I remember you could see these railroad tracks and you could see the trains passing and that used to be a treat for us, 'cause where we lived in Wailupe, you don't get to see trains or anything. So that was a real treat for us to see those trains in Waipahu.

MK: And so, you know, your mother's stepmother was kind of strict and your mother and father, before they got married, would meet each other, but with someone there. And do you know about when they decided to get married, your mom and dad?

RY: You mean what day they got married?

MK: Mm hmm. The year is fine. What year they got married?

RY: Um, they got married. . . . This would be what, 17th of September? This is 1921, 1921, yeah. Seventeenth of September, 1921. But then we teased Dad a lot after we found out that (Mom's name was different). "You didn't get married to a girl named Susoe." (Upon) visiting different state offices, they said that the clerks (in the old days) weren't sure what they heard, they would write down what they heard. They weren't sure of the spelling of the word so it seemed as though my father got married to a girl named Sumie Fukuyama, which wasn't even my mother's name. So I believe what they say, they wrote down whatever they heard or they didn't check the spelling. But she went by Susoe all the years but then I told them, "Your name wasn't Susoe, it says Sumie." (chuckles) And then later on when she went to look for her birth certificate, she found out she was not Susoe at all—Surie. I remember him teasing her, "Boy, you('re) (a) expensive wife, now I have to go to the lieutenant governor's office to change your name."

MK: So much confusion, yeah.

RY: (Yes), and he had it legally changed. And I remember their checkbooks read Susoe Ishibashi and Wataru Ishibashi. So he said, "Now, I have to get to the bank to change everything." And he kept teasing her that, "Boy, you're real expensive wife."

MK: And I notice, you know in this record of marriage between your father, Wataru Ishibashi, and your mother, it's signed by a pastor or priest of the Shinto temple.

RY: Oh, that's right.

MK: So I guess they were married by a Shinto priest.

RY: I never did ask her where she got married, but I guess so, because their picture, she's in a kimono. And she say in those days usually the female got married in the mother's. . . . In a *montsuki* with the mother's *mon*. And she said that was her *montsuki* with the *mon* on, she said there was a *mon* on it. And this was their wedding picture. And so when we looked at it I said, "Oh, who did all your hairdo and everything?" And I remember she said that there were people in that business, where they fix the bride's hairdo. And she said that these people who's in business, you go there and they'll fix your hair, and put all the ornaments on and everything. And people would dress her in the kimono because it had to be a certain way, and no way is she able to do it herself. And she remembers her stepmother had someone come and dress her. And I thought she told me that, like this fan that she's carrying, it was a gift of her stepmother. Plus, I think every bride that went into marriage took a *tansu*. And I remember her having that *tansu*, it was a large *tansu*, and she treasured that. Probably because those were the only things that tied her with her parents.

MK: And your father here in his wedding picture is dressed in a western suit.

RY: Yes, yes. She said that was very common. The man would be in western suit, but usually the bride in a Japanese outfit. Until they gradually changed where they went into a western gown. But in her day, she said, they were still getting married in a kimono.

MK: Did your father ever share his memories of how he met your mother and their wedding and everything?

RY: He didn't---he's a typical Japanese man who doesn't talk too much about those things. And when we would ask him, he would say just a few things about meeting my mother but he does not comment, you know, about what he thought. . . . My mother said, "Oh, he was real handsome." (Chuckles) But he never did comment about her. And I guess men, their nature is just a few words, especially Japanese men. So he didn't say too much. So whatever I remember it came mostly from my mother.

MK: And your father, I was wondering, when and where was he born?

RY: He was born April 1, 1903, in Waialua [to Shojiro and Sei Ishibashi].

MK: And what do you remember about his family's background?

RY: Well, whatever I remember or know of his family's background is through my *babachan*, his mother. And she lived with us all the time. And she used to tell stories about olden days. So whatever I know, it came from *Babachan*. Like she used to raise chickens. So in order to feed the chickens they couldn't afford just those chicken feed that you buy, she used to supplement it by cutting grass, certain kind of grass. She would mix it in. But in order to cut the grass she has to do a lot of real fine chopping, and so many of us kids, like myself and my other sister, we would have to help, too. And we used to dread it, so we would make sure we would watch the time, more or less about what time she's going to chop the grass. We would try to go away, playing or go away, but you couldn't do that all the time. Being girls, you couldn't do that all the time. So okay, all right, if I'm going to have to chop grass with her, she would sit us down, but then I got to the place where, oh, I didn't mind chopping the grass because *Babachan* had lots of stories to tell you. She had lots of stories to tell you and got to be interesting. Later on I didn't make an effort to just run away from that chore because I would tell her I want to talk stories with you and she would tell me stories.

'Cause I found out when she came to Hawai'i now---she and her husband, now, were not real young people. Like my grandma said she was, I think, in her thirties. Not her thirties when she came, but she was thirty and she was still childless, she didn't have any children. And I remember at one of those chopping sessions she told me that because she didn't have any children she wrote to her sister in Japan to look for a boy child that she could adopt. Because I understand (the) immigrants that were coming to work in Hawai'i, sometimes they brought children for another family. So she wrote to her sister to look for a boy child, that she wants to adopt, knowing that she wasn't able to have any children. And she told me that they found a boy child but then her sister, who did not have any children, took that child and adopted that child herself. And she told me she was very upset and she was very angry at her sister about it. And she thought that, well, she's not going to have any children, probably. But she was so upset about that. She told me how upset(ing) it was and how angry (she was) about that. She told me that I think when she was about thirty-one or thirty-two she finally got pregnant and that was with my father. And she felt that she was very fortunate and I think she told me that her thinking was that she got repaid for what the sister did to her with that child. (Chuckles) And that somehow God gave her the opportunity to get pregnant and she was able to have my father.

MK: And your father Wataru Ishibashi was the only child.

RY: And he was the only child she was able to have.

MK: And, you know, your grandparents, your Ishibashi grandparents, what *ken* did they come from?

RY: They came from Fukuoka prefecture and we had information—Yame-gun Hoshino-mura, they say that Yame-gun would be more or less probably the district in Japan and the Hoshino-mura was the village. I found out it was way out in the countryside. I remember Grandma saying that there were a lot of mountains, but it's a small village and it's considered *inaka*. And when she told me that I thought to myself, Grandfather Ishibashi to be able to come out from the *inaka*, you know, to a strange place like this, I felt how brave he must have been in those days to be able to make up his mind to leave his home country to come to a strange place. Because I found documents that he came in 1898 and he had come alone. And my grandma had come later in the 1900s.

MK: And would you know why your grandma and grandpa came out to Hawai'i?

RY: Well, she told me in Japan a lot of people were struggling, and the farmers were being taxed very heavily, but farming was real hard in those days. And if you're a farmer, you had land, but you had to struggle for your everyday living. When they heard that they were taking immigrants to come to Hawai'i to work on plantation, they would hear these fabulous stories about how much money you could make and everything. And I think probably Grandpa Ishibashi decided that he is going to come. But I remember *Babachan* telling me that among the Ishibashi family there were bitter arguments about it. But I think that if you lived in the *inaka*, people are afraid to venture too far, and to go to Hawai'i, a foreign country. And she did say that the Ishibashi family was against it, against Grandpa Ishibashi leaving Japan to come to a strange place. But I think she told me the other families had children already, but since they did not have children Grandpa Ishibashi thought that, well, he's going to go. And that's how he came to Hawai'i to work for Waiialua [Agricultural Company] plantation.

MK: And Grandpa Ishibashi, would you know if he was the first son, second son, third son?

RY: I thought they told me that he was the oldest son. I remember *Babachan* telling me that he was the oldest son and that's why there was so much protest about him going. Because usually, in a Japanese family, the oldest son is very important.

MK: And in those days, did the Ishibashi family own the land that they had in Fukuoka?

RY: *Babachan* told me that they were all farmers and they owned the land. They were farmers, they were poor farmers, but they did have land.

MK: And when your grandfather Ishibashi left Japan, that meant his wife was left there, yeah?

RY: Right, so *Babachan* stayed back. And then *Babachan*---she couldn't remember what year she came and I just didn't have time to go back and check with immigration as to when she had come, but she told me it was in the 1900s. Because she was telling me about the changes that was taking place in Hawai'i. I found out that in 1900s Hawai'i had the first censorship, not the censorship---yeah, the census, they took the first census in 1900. *Babachan* was trying to tell me about---I thought she meant the American Civil War, but then later I found out she is telling me about Hawai'i's overthrow, the kingdom of Hawai'i, where they overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani. And they were, I guess, the first generation, the issei immigrants were witnesses to that overthrow. So she was talking about this battle, the overthrow and

everything. I thought she was talking about American history, but later on it came to me that she's talking about the overthrow of the Hawai'i kingdom.

MK: So she came after the overthrow, yeah?

RY: No, my father was born in 1903, and the overthrow was in 1903? Queen Lili'uokalani's . . .

MK: Actually by 1900 Hawai'i was incorporated as a territory of the United States, so when your father's mother came, she came after the overthrow. But the queen was still living.

RY: Yeah, and I think she was [at one time] under house arrest at Washington Place. Anyway, she was telling about that, but it turned out to be the Hawaiian history that she's talking about.

MK: She was really very observant. She knew things.

RY: Yeah, she knew a lot of things and she remembered a lot of things. So it got to be real interesting to talk to *Babachan*. Like she would talk about Japan, how poor they were. And she used to tell me they used to eat *yamaimo* and *mugi*, not rice. And *mugi* is barley, I think. She said only the rich people ate rice.

MK: When she told you about the old times, did she ever share memories of her coming over, the voyage to Hawai'i, or her first impressions of Hawai'i?

RY: She told me that it was a long trip. And it was real hard to come on the ships. It was not a luxury ship. People were just crammed, and a lot of families had children who got sick. She did remember that part, I remember her talking about that. And she said it was not easy. She said she was lucky she was only herself to take care of. She said she remembers a lot of family who had children who got sick and they didn't have enough food. She didn't emphasize too much about the voyage part, but she remembers it was a real hard trip to make, to come over. And she just told me a few things about living in Waialua, where they had this plantation homes. (She said it was really hard work on the plantation and all the families struggled.)

MK: What did she remember about her time in Waialua?

RY: She didn't tell me too much about Waialua. But I do know that since my father was born in Waialua and couldn't remember when she had moved from Waialua. But then Grandpa Ishibashi got a job at Hind-Clarke Dairy, and that they had moved to the Wailupe, the Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead. [After working Waialua, the Ishibashis moved to Wailupe where they resided on Judge Antonio Perry's property. Shojiro Ishibashi was a caretaker there. This property later became part of Hind-Clarke Dairy and the Ishibashis continued to reside there as employees of the dairy. See Tr. 22-46-5-92.]

MK: You know in Waialua, would you remember from your grandmother what kind of work your Grandpa Ishibashi was doing in Waialua?

RY: I thought she said that he worked in the [sugarcane] fields. I can't remember now what she had said too much about Waialua, but I thought that he had worked out in the fields, because he was a farmer in Japan and I think his job was to work out in the fields.

MK: And I was wondering, how did it come to be that they ended up in Wailupe at the Hind-Clarke Dairy?

RY: That was the part that I don't remember her telling me anything. How, you know, they got to go to Wailupe. If I talked to my father more he probably would remember, although he's of age now, too, and he doesn't say too much about it.

MK: Did she ever give descriptions of what Wailupe was like when your dad was small?

RY: She said that area was---well, anything outside of the city area was considered rural (chuckles), but not as *inaka* as Waialua. But she said that when they moved to Wailupe it wasn't as *inaka* as Waialua, she remembers. But it was still considered rural. And she said most of the land there was fields, so I take it that my grandfather worked in the Hind-Clarke Dairy fields 'cause they had their own alfalfa fields and a large area was cattle feed. In fact, all of the land in front of the homestead, beyond the road, on one side toward the cliff were the homes. Then there was a road, a junky road, then beyond that was all cultivated for dairy use. And it was mostly alfalfa and all those dairy feed for the cattle.

MK: So you think that your Grandpa Ishibashi was sort of farming alfalfa for the Hind-Clarke Dairy.

RY: I would think so.

MK: And they were residing up there.

RY: Right.

MK: And what was their place called? Was there a name for where your grandpa and grandma Ishibashi settled in Wailupe?

RY: Oh, that was called the Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead. And it was owned by the Hind-Clarke Dairy.

MK: If you were to tell me where it is now, where was this Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead?

RY: It was the roadway leading from Kalaniana'ole Highway. Now at the very corner there was a [W. K. "Woody"] Cummins family living on the entrance of the road. And that road had no name, I remember, it had no name. And it was just called Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead. But at the very entrance, as you face the mountains, there were vacant lots on your right, but the only home at that corner was the Cummins home right at the corner of that road and Kalaniana'ole Highway on your left side, going into that valley.

MK: And when your grandma and grandpa and dad were living there, you know, what other people were there, at the Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead?

RY: Oh, there were all different families who worked for Hind-Clarke Dairy, like I remember the Oshiro family. All them were not actually Hind-Clarke Dairy employees. There were other people living in that area, they probably rented the homes from the dairy, but they did not work for Hind-Clarke Dairy. But I remember Mr. Oshiro did, and I understand Mr. Tamashiro did. Of course, Mr. Tamashiro later died. And there were another Filipino family

and they worked for the Hind-Clarke Dairy. So in between there were families that worked for the dairy and some who did not. Like the Hirata family, I remember, now, Mr. Hirata ran the school bus. He had this unusually large truck. The back side had long benches and it had railing and he could lower a step for the schoolchildren to go in. And he ran the school bus for that area. And Mr. Hirata would pick up all the children in that homestead, and I remember he making two runs. The second run he would go as far as Kuli'ou'ou, and as far as what is now Lunalilo Home Road to pick up children in that area to take them to school, to Wai'ala School.

MK: And that was like during your time, when you were at school, when you were a schoolchild?

RY: Right, right. 'Cause we went on that school bus to school. And if you missed the first one you had to make sure to be at a certain area so you would catch his second run, which would be a long run into Lunalilo Home Road. So if you wanted the extra ride, you had to be sure to catch him going the other way and then getting the ride and going to school. Otherwise he would pick you up at the very end of his run, going into school.

MK: And so, at the time when your father was still a little boy, the Hiratas were there, too? And the other families were there when your father was a little boy?

RY: I would think so, because while he was growing up, I'm sure a lot of the families already lived there. One of our neighbors were the Yamaguchis and they had children all of our age. And they were friends of *Babachan*, and when *Babachan* passed away, my father occasionally went to see (them).

MK: And, you know, I was wondering, did the Hinds live there?

RY: Now the Hinds lived---they had their own homes, these large homes, beautiful homes in those days, on Kalaniana'ole Highway. And Hind-Clarke Dairy had this drive-in where they had their own ice cream parlor [Hind-Clarke Drive Inn]. And later on it got to be known as M's Ranch House. Until only recently it was still there, and they finally closed down. But it started out as a Hind-Clarke Dairy ice cream parlor, but people drove in there to buy ice cream. 'Cause I know my sister had a job there, my older sister.

MK: So the Hind's family did live in that area, though, they lived on Kalaniana'ole?

RY: I do remember the son of Mr. [Robert] Hind, Robson Hind. He lived in the large home and I heard that was his family home.

MK: I was wondering, when we've studied plantation areas, there was a big difference between the plantation management and the homes they had and what the workers had. How did the workers' families' homes compare with the Hinds' homes? What did your grandma and grandpa Ishibashi house look like way back then?

RY: Well, the original house was not bad. It was large, with a large porch, but of course, Grandpa Ishibashi, I understand, added part of the home, so it was an add-on to the original home. But as I remember, many of the homes were not that bad homes. Like the home that Yamaguchi lived in, it was two-story home. And of course, each family, I take it as the family increased, they added their own. So naturally, there would be portion of a nice-looking home, then there would be portion of an add-on (chuckles) that was not that nice, like Grandpa Ishibashi's

home. He kept adding on. And I take it that like most of those families, especially the Japanese families, they wanted a *furoba*. So I remember that portion was an add-on. And I used to protest sometimes, I think, to the girls in my family—my sisters, you know—that the *furoba* area had wide gaps in the wall and that somebody might look through and we didn't want to undress.

(Laughter)

RY: So I know that was add-ons, because it didn't look as nice as the original part of the homes.

MK: And there was indoor plumbing?

RY: Oh yes.

MK: That was during your grandpa and grandma Ishibashi's time or your time?

RY: Yes, I take it, it was there, the plumbing was there and . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

RY: I remember the *furoba* because almost all of the homes had either adjoining or away from the home, they made the *furo*. And every family, I remember, used to burn wood to make the hot water. And Grandma would be very strict and we had to take turns cleaning out all the ashes, and you had to make sure that the wood was there to burn the hot water. But then it was one of those *furo* where you wash yourself and you could just soak yourself. I thought it was a redwood tub.

MK: Sounds real comfortable.

RY: It was. In those days we didn't think too much about it. "Oh, how come we don't have a bathtub?" You know how kids are. And we would constantly grumble, "Why don't we have a regular bathroom where the tile and everything else is there? And get a bathtub." But it was one of those *furo* things. You just went in and soaked up to your neck. And I guess as a child you don't treasure those things until you lose it. Then you think about it and you wish you had one of those *furos*.

MK: Each of the Japanese families would have that type of *furoba*?

RY: I would think so. I remember most of them having a *furo*, either adjoining to the garage or somewhere in their home. I take it that almost all the families had a *furo* that they used wood to burn.

MK: And you had a kitchen?

RY: Yes, yes, yes. We had a kitchen with plumbing and everything else. In fact, now the kitchen area, I remember, there was a sink, the plumbing, and on the other side of the wall we had

the table to eat. But then on the add-on, now, on the add-on side, I remember one of those stoves that you can burn wood, because my grandma, *Babachan* had one of those old rice cookers that she brought from Japan that had an outer lip in the center of the pot. You had to put this wooden cover on it with two handles. And we cooked rice that way. And they also had a kerosene stove. They had a kerosene stove that you did cooking on. But that was on add-on side. But my mother's refrigerator, that she treasured, was right next to the table in the regular kitchen side.

MK: And that refrigerator was the old type with the engine on top?

RY: That was the old type, with the engine on the top, that round circular motor. But I do remember us having that old-fashioned icebox, too. Because I remember my dad bringing home ice, that you had to put ice, I think, in the inside. You have to make sure the pan was there to catch all the dripping water. I remember that, but later on I don't know what happened to it, after they got the new one. I can't remember what happened to the old one, whether it was given to somebody else or. . . . But I don't remember having it around the house anymore, so it might have been given away for someone else to use.

MK: I take it that, after your mom and dad got married and you were all born, you folks lived in the house that was originally *Babachan's* and Grandpa Ishibashi's house, yeah?

RY: Ishibashi, yes. And I remember *Babachan* saying that the Hind-Clarke Dairy owners told her and Grandpa Ishibashi that as long as there was an Ishibashi living that you could stay there. You know, in those days it was like a gentlemen's agreement among employer, employee, and that you can stay there as long as you're living. Or like my dad started to work for the dairy, so I take it that we were going to still live there.

MK: And you know, you were saying that your grandpa Ishibashi probably helped farm the alfalfa. And when he was working for the dairy, your dad was growing up. What school did your dad go to?

RY: Oh, he mentioned some school, uh, I don't think it was Wai'ala'e School. But he did mention going to school. I remember him saying it was hard because his parents spoke Japanese, but luckily he had a lot of friends who spoke English. And he learned English real fast that way, even though his parents were immigrants. But *Babachan*, I give her a lot of credit. She knew a lot of Pidgin English, enough to understand if we used pidgin. And she learned a lot of Hawaiian words, because she said that there were a lot of Hawaiian people and they got to be friends with the elder Hawaiians, and you had to learn what they were talking about. And she learned a lot of Hawaiian that way. But while growing up we couldn't distinguish Hawaiian from Japanese, so we mixed everything up. And you find out the hard way, like when you went to Japanese[-language] school where the teacher says that is not *Nihongo*. But for you it is because *Babachan* used it. And you argued your point, but then when you went home, half crying to *Babachan*, "The *sensei* said this."

She said, "Oh, *are wa* Hawaiian *dakara*" ("Oh, because that's Hawaiian").

"But *Babachan*, you use it."

But she says, "Hawaiian *da*, *Nihongo de wa nai*" ("It's Hawaiian, not Japanese").

So for us it was a struggle. Distinguishing which is Japanese, which is Hawaiian because *Babachan* used it constantly in her speech to us.

MK: So I guess your dad also became acquainted with that when he was a boy.

RY: (Yes) right. So he knew a lot of Hawaiian words, too. And I would hear Grandma using—she would meet a Hawaiian person—“*Pehea 'oe.*” And you would think oh, Japanese, but then it got to be where it wasn't Japanese at all. It was in Hawaiian, she's asking them how they were. For us, we did not care what language it was or it didn't matter to us. It was, “Oh, she's Japanese, she must. . . .” We didn't even stop to think, in our days, oh, she's talking to a Hawaiian, she couldn't be using Japanese. But then for us we think that everybody spoke all those languages. And it was unimportant to us, in those days, what language it was.

MK: So going back to your dad's time, he had people who spoke English, he had friends who spoke Hawaiian, or knew families where they were still speaking Hawaiian. Did he ever tell you or did your *Babachan* tell you about your dad's childhood? What was his childhood like in that area?

RY: *Babachan* kept telling me about my father, but it was mostly how much she treasured that boy. She said having that child at an older age and to think that she knew she couldn't have a child and here she was able to have my father. She kept telling me how precious that child got to be. She used to always use a Japanese word that he was the family treasure like a family *takara*?

MK: Treasure. *Takara-mono.*

RY: Yeah, she kept using that word, *takara-mono*. Yeah, *takara-mono*. That he is the Ishibashi's *takara-mono*. Later on I found out, oh, that word is a “treasure.” So she treasured my father. And she used to tell me, whatever he wanted, what was that word that she kept using? There was nothing that she would not get for him.

MK: She wouldn't deprive him of anything.

RY: Right, right.

MK: Were your grandpa and *Babachan* able to give your dad the things that he wanted? I was wondering, how well were they doing?

RY: I would think, because they were immigrants, too they were not wealthy. But there was a picture of my father with a horse. A horse. I said, “Oh, Dad, whose horse is that?”

“Oh, my horse.”

I said, “What do you mean, your horse?”

“That was my horse.”

And I remember asking *Babachan*, “How come he had a horse?” They bought him a horse so he could ride the horse to wherever he want to go. So I take it that although they were poor, they did well enough that they would buy him a horse. But there were a lot of stories—I

never got to know my grandfather, he died right after the second girl in the family was born. He was able to name her, my sister(s) (were) named by my grandfather, but he had died after that. So by the time I was born Grandpa Ishibashi was not around. But then I heard enough stories about Grandpa Ishibashi from my mother and some from my *Babachan*.

MK: What did you hear about your Grandpa Ishibashi?

RY: My mother, now, tells me about my grandfather that I never knew. That when she married into the Ishibashi family, that Grandpa Ishibashi treated her like his own daughter. And in a Japanese family, the mother-in-law was the head of the family like, besides the father-in-law, and she had the last say. And daughter-in-laws were looked down upon, I understand, even in Japan. And my grandmother being the issei, I take it that she had the same habits or traits or customs, whatever it was, that my mother was—like in Japan—the daughter-in-law was there to serve the family. But my mother tells me her father-in-law never treated her that way. That she used to be treated equally. And whenever there were arguments in the family, my father-in-law always took part for her and watched out for her. She also told me that Grandpa Ishibashi was one of those—you hear is one of those people who give their shirts away to somebody. Grandpa Ishibashi was like that. But he loved his drinking. And he would come home, but somehow no matter how drunk he was, after drinking with his friends, he always came home and he was in a very jolly mood. He was not the violent man. He was always happy-go-lucky.

And my mother said one day there was a big commotion because he actually came home without his shirt. I said, "What do you mean, Mama?"

It seemed as though somebody's shirt either got stolen or lost and that man didn't dare go home without a shirt. And so Grandpa Ishibashi gave his shirt to save that man and came home without his shirt. And there was a big argument between *Babachan* and *Jichan* because he gave his shirt away. And I thought to myself, "Oh, that saying is true, even as far back as then." But my mother said that he actually gave his shirt away and he came home without his shirt. And that caused a big argument in the family with *Babachan*, because *Babachan* was more thrifty, whereas *Jichan* would, if you didn't watch it, he would give everything away. (When he) came home, there was no way to check his money, but she said she knew that he gave a lot of his money away. I said, "Because he was drunk?"

She said, "Well, partly because of that and partly because he would hear sad stories, hard luck stories, and he would give the money away."

So in my young age I got the impression that, oh, Grandpa and Grandma were really opposite from the stories I would hear. Because *Babachan* was really thrifty. She would tell us not to waste and she would save scraps of cloth and things. To this day I think a couple of the members in my family actually have her quilts. And she hand-quilted all those quilts.

MK: She was very thrifty and he was kind of . . .

RY: Happy-go-lucky.

MK: And generous.

RY: And generous, gave things away.

MK: I was wondering, on the plantations I know that if an employee lived on plantation grounds, they would have a plantation house and they had to pay no rent. But I was wondering, how about out in Wailupe? Would you know if Grandpa and Grandma Ishibashi had to pay any rent for the house that they lived in? I was curious about . . .

RY: The way I heard it now—as I remember the story—as long as you were an employee of the dairy, you did not have to pay rent. But if you were there in one of their homes and was not an employee, I understand they paid a very low rent for it. I understand the owners of the dairy were very generous, and their rent was very low.

MK: I was wondering, the plantation in the old days used to supply kerosene to the workers. But say about the dairy, did they supply meat . . .

RY: No, they . . .

MK: . . . or milk or cheese?

RY: I know my dad was able to—the dairy supplied whatever milk they needed. I remember we always had butter, rich butter, rich cream, and cheese. I remember we were brought up on cottage cheese. And my mother used to love cottage cheese. And I thought that cottage cheese was everybody's food. That's how ignorant I was about that, that I thought everybody ate cottage cheese. I remember the cottage cheese mostly, we were brought up on cottage cheese, milk and things. So naturally we had cream for our cereal, not milk, pure cream. That's why to this day I always remind my father, "That's why, Dad, our whole family had high cholesterol." (Chuckles) It runs in the family, all of us had high cholesterol. "Dad, it's your fault because you fed us rich cream, rich butter." We had butter to put on our toast, we had butter to butter our sandwiches. So I do know that the dairy provided for the workers.

MK: How about meat? Did the dairy ever slaughter their livestock and distribute meat?

RY: I never did hear about the meat part. It was always the milk, cheese, whatever cheese you wanted, and all those things. But not meat because I remember my mother buying meat. My grandmother, because she raised chickens we had chickens. We provided our own chicken, eggs, we had all the eggs. That's another high cholesterol.

(Laughter)

RY: We had all the eggs we wanted to eat. We had eggs in every form, in any kind of omelette you could think of. And *Babachan* used to feed us chive omelette. I used to get so sick of it and now it's a gourmet food. (Chuckles) Yeah, but I used to get so sick of it, chive omelette, onion omelette, green onion omelette. Then because, I guess, we would grumble so much, she would mix some other things in it. I remember her mixing tuna in it and sardines in it, trying to fool us that it was something else. (Chuckles) Yeah.

MK: When it comes to food, the dairy would provide dairy goods, your grandmother had chickens . . .

RY: We had lots of eggs and she grew a lot of vegetables.

MK: How about if you needed something from the store? Where did your *babachan* go for store-

bought goods?

RY: Well, I don't know about my grandma but by the time I was born my mother used to order through the stores. Like things like toilet paper. In those days I guess you didn't need too much, as long as you had enough food. But she used to buy toothbrushes, toothpaste. Those things, she used to buy at the store. There used to be a Wai'alaie Store.

MK: Where was that?

RY: It was at the corner of Wai'alaie Avenue and 'Ō'ili Road. There was a large store. Now I forget what family owned it, but it used to be called the Wai'alaie Store. And they had anything from toothbrush, soap, everything else. And they also had a meat counter, I remember, in the back they had the meat counter. And my mother used to buy meat from them.

MK: How about dry goods like fabric?

RY: Oh, now where did she used to buy? I think they used to have the dry goods, too. I remember on one side of the wall, yeah, I think they would have certain amount, a selected amount of dry goods.

MK: With clothes and everything?

RY: Not mostly clothes, but material and threads and things. And I remember as soon as my oldest sister was able to go to sewing school, she went to sewing school because she have to sew for the family. And because she have to give up her summer vacation to go to sewing school to sew for the family, I remember, she used to protest because she has to give up her summer fun, right. It's just like going to work, going to summer school, I mean sewing school to sew for everybody, while we get to play.

And I remember that, so then my father made it, "That's right, she's doing all the work, so you folks will have to help with the laundry, help with the housework and everything else." And she didn't need to do it. He said, "That's fair enough."

But then when we---kids will be kids, I don't care what. So we used to grumble among ourselves that we had to do her laundry. But not realizing that she's sewing our clothes to go to school. But that's kids, you don't reason the other half, what the other person's doing. I remember I used to grumble, "How come we have to do all the housework? How come we have to wash your clothes?"

MK: That's really interesting. At least in your generation you had sisters and brothers, yeah? But your dad's generation, he was the only child and I guess during his time family life was just him and his mom and his dad, yeah?

RY: And his dad.

MK: And before I forget to ask this question, I was wondering, what kind of work did the other employees of Hind-Clarke Dairy do?

RY: Oh, the employees there?

MK: Yeah, of Hind-Clarke Dairy. You had your grandfather that took care of the alfalfa. How about his contemporaries? What kind of work were they doing at the dairy?

RY: As I remember now, the owners were like I say, very generous. Lot of times, the children in the neighborhood go to the dairy. And I remember where the milk was being processed, it's all enclosed with glass. Big building with all this machinery going on. But the building itself was closed up with glass and we would watch, stand outside and watch all the milk bottles coming down on this belt and being filled. So each building had all different functions going on. Across the building, I remember, was an office where there were office workers. And my sister in her later years got a job in the office there. And so there would be different plants going on and sometimes they would let us go to the area where the cows were being washed. You know, they were given a bath before they're gonna be milked. Before the machinery came in, I remember there would be men sitting and milking the cows. There were pastures, all enclosed, and that's where all the cows were kept. And in the back of the pastures were another row of houses, because Mrs. [Marjorie Tomoe] Fukamoto was the cook for all the bachelors that lived there. There were houses there. And each house had so many bachelors. And Mrs. Fukamoto used to do the cooking and she used to do the laundry for the bachelors, while Mr. [Jitsutaro] Fukamoto was the foreman to take care of the cattle, I remember, the cows, yeah. Some of the jobs were—and they were Filipino workers, too—they would go and feed the cattle. Put the feed in the trough. And some of them, their job was to wash down the cows. And I remember watching them wash the cows and they used to say that they're gonna give the cow a shower or a bath. And I thought, "What do they mean, give them a bath or shower?" And that's when I found out, "Oh, they actually wash the cows first." Especially the milking area, underneath, they have to wash them down before they milk them.

MK: Hand-milking.

RY: And later on, I remember, they brought in machineries where the cows would go through this area and the water would come down on them, and shoot on them. And each cow passing through got washed that way. And then later on they got those machinery where they put the suction on to the nipples, and the machine, yeah. So it was a big dairy. But like I said we were allowed to go and watch. But you couldn't go into the plant because it's closed for sanitation. But I remember sitting out there, all of us kids lined up against the wall of the windows, all watching.

MK: And like your dad . . .

RY: And they had a fleet of trucks, milk trucks. And like my father would go and deliver. They would load up, they would have people loading up. And he had to know his route. He would know his route, where to go and deliver milk.

MK: So when your dad became of age to be employed at Hind-Clarke Dairy, what was his job?

RY: Milkman.

MK: Milkman. By milkman you mean . . .

RY: He would go and deliver. He would drive the truck with other drivers and they would divide the sections, where to go and deliver. And I remember some of them used to go and deliver to schools. Now if you were an employee of the [dairy], the dairy sent this truck, your milk

was separated and had special arrangement with the school that your milk was in this section of the icebox. And we didn't have to stand in line to pay for it, we just walked into the kitchen, opened the door, and took your milk out. That was if the dairy provided your milk. So you don't go through the regular procedure of having your nickel ready to pay for it and get your milk.

But like any other children, there's always something. We went home and grumbled to my dad, "No, Dad, we rather have five cents and buy the regular milk, because the other kids get a piece of graham cracker." They got a piece of graham cracker with their milk. And so we went home and grumbled, "But when we get our milk, there's no cracker for us." Because the school is not doing it under the school system. The dairy is providing your milk so you go and pick up your milk. So you don't have a piece of cracker to go with it.

So then my dad said, "All right, stop your grumbling." Told my mother to buy graham cracker. "Here, each day you take your graham cracker."

(Laughter)

MK: Good solution.

RY: But when you're a kid, even a piece of graham cracker is so important. And you're different from the other kids because your milk is different and you don't get a cracker and you don't stand in line. Somehow you get identified, you know. Mom would say, "All right, here's your graham cracker. Take your graham cracker with you." But that's how selfish we were and how important those little things got to be.

MK: But you were only children.

RY: And when you grow up and you think about it, you can laugh about it. But those are the small little things that are so important to a child. It's amazing.

MK: So your dad used to go and deliver particular routes, set routes or . . .

RY: Yeah, set routes. And I remember he delivered, I think, in the Mānoa, Nu'uanu area. And it was all those homes where the Cooke family lived, all those well-known people. I remember he said that when you delivered in those rich areas, at Christmastime they were very generous, even to the milkman. You know, at Christmastime. He said one day this lady—I forgot what family—left just a pack of cigarettes for him. When he opened it up it was just a pack of cigarettes, and he said, "Oh, it's just a pack of cigarettes, and I don't even smoke." He said he was going to throw it away. And he got curious. "Why just a pack of cigarettes?" But on the back side of the cigarettes, there was a ten-dollar bill. And so he said—in those days ten dollars was big money, that was big money. But he said usually those rich families were very generous, even to the milkman delivering, they left a Christmas gift of some kind.

MK: What kind of Christmas gifts would he get from the other families?

RY: He used to tell me that some of the other families left a box of handkerchief, all different things. Some would leave a box of candy. So depending on the family he got all different kinds of. . . . But he said a lot of them left envelopes with a Christmas card and there's usually money in it, five dollars or ten dollars.

MK: And did he get to know any of these pretty wealthy people living in Mānoa and Nu‘uanu? Would they talk to him or something when he came?

RY: He said usually no, because usually they deliver to kitchen, the back side. If he got to see anybody, it was the cook of the family or the maid of the family. So he got to see the cook or the maid or the yardman or somebody. One of the servants of the rich family, but never the owners. He said, but once in a while he would meet up with them. I remember him saying that they were very nice.

MK: I was wondering, how much money do you think he made as a milkman? Was it okay or was it little? Did you have any indication?

RY: I don't really know how much he used to make as a milkman. I never thought about that, I never thought about that. And I really don't know how much he made as a milkman.

MK: You know, I was wondering, when he was a milkman, how big was your family already?

RY: Up until that time that we left—Kent was born while we were still there, so there were seven children.

MK: And that would be like—tell me when all your sisters and brothers were born approximately? You're the third one, yeah?

RY: I'm the third one [after sisters, Gladys and Helen] and I was born in 1927. Then the next one, Richard, is '29. And there were some gaps, one was '34, I remember. Of course, the youngest one, Kent, was born in 1941, August '41. But then Tom was born in 1930s. He must have been about three years [earlier] than Kent. So it's anywhere from nineteen. . . . I think my oldest sister [Gladys] is '24, 1924 or '23, probably '23.

MK: So quite a few of you to support, yeah?

RY: Yeah. And yet I remember, he always had schoolbooks and pencils and everything for us, for school. I never gave it a thought. I guess when you're young, you don't think about those things. And we always had new dresses to go to school. And before school started, we were all taken down to the store to buy new shoes. And a lot of times, my dad was a believer in that Sears [Roebuck and Company] catalog. And he ordered a lot of things through the Sears catalog before school started. 'Cause I remember, in my days, I don't know whether you heard about it, they used to call it the saddler, the shoes.

MK: Oh, saddle shoes?

RY: Yes, yes. Either black and white or brown and white. And that was the fad. And he ordered one for us through the catalog. And as much as we hated school we wanted to start school because we wanted to wear the shoes to show off.

(Laughter)

RY: 'Cause that was the fad. One year it got to be a fad. And I could hardly wait. Then I remember one year, Sears catalog came out with this—the first, they call it. . . . It's a plastic raincoat and he ordered the raincoat for us. And we wished that it would rain, we wished it

would rain so we could show off our raincoats. Because nobody had those raincoats, you know. And would you believe it, it wouldn't rain, you know. And all those kids wanted to know, "Why you carrying that when it's not raining?" It was just to show off the raincoat. (Laughs) But you could get that only through Sears. So my dad saw it and he ordered it for us. It had a raincoat and, I remember, a rain cap so you wouldn't get wet. But when you recall those things it's so funny now. (Chuckles)

MK: Yeah, I guess, yeah, you want to show off your new things especially if because no one else has it, yeah.

RY: Yeah, really. And my mother would say, "Why are you taking that? It's not even raining."

"Well, Mama, it might rain in the afternoon. I hope it rains in the afternoon." (Laughs)

And she used to say, "No, leave it home, it's not even raining."

Okay, I remember one day, she said, "No, leave it home." Sure enough, after school it rained, and I was so angry. (Laughs) I didn't have my raincoat with me, and it rained. And those are the things that you recall. You laugh about it now.

MK: You mentioned that you folks were going to school. What school did you go to?

RY: We went to Wai'alaie School. It's still existing there.

MK: Same location?

RY: Same location [Nineteenth and Harding avenues].

MK: And what grade did you go up to there at Wai'alaie?

RY: Up to the sixth grade. And from there, seventh grade, Lili'uokalani [in Kaimukī] used to be the intermediate school. But as the population grew and the student increase, they had to break it up and they got to use only that for the seventh graders. The eighth and ninth graders had to go down to Kaimukī, Kaimukī School. And that got to be the Kaimukī Intermediate School. But that was before it got to be---no, it's still an intermediate school. It only broke up that one grade. But now, I understand, all of them is there, at that one location because that building, Lili'uokalani School, is being used, I think, for special [education] students or something. Or either for handicapped students or something.

MK: I was wondering, what memories you have of going to Wai'alaie Elementary School? You were mentioning how that bus Mr. Hirata had would take you folks to school. What other special memories do you have about Wai'alaie School and the children that went there with you?

RY: Most of the children, I remember, most of us were Japanese. I guess because by the areas, you know, it would be more Japanese families. Because there was an Ali'iōlani School where a lot of the *Haole* kids went to. Because in those days that was like an English standard school, and it was different from a regular school. And most of the *Haole* kids went there. Or some of the richer children of rich families went there. So there was a mixture of students at Wai'alaie School. Some Hawaiian kids, Portuguese, Chinese, but I think most of the Japanese

families sent their kids to a regular public school. So that's why I remember more of us being Japanese, because the area, now, Wailupe, Wai'alaie area was noted as a Japanese community. The 'Ō'ili Road, upper 'Ō'ili, lower 'Ō'ili and there was a Kapakahi Street, they were all Japanese families.

MK: What kind of work did most of these families do? Like your family was at a dairy. How about all these other Wai'alaie Japanese?

RY: Oh, I know a lot of them were farmers.

MK: They had their own truck farms?

RY: A lot of them were farmers. And lot of them in 'Ō'ili Road and Kapakahi used to be pig farmers. A lot of them were either vegetable farmers or pig farmers or chicken farmers. And there was another dairy.

MK: Is that Costa?

RY: No, used to be called, I think, Wai'alaie Nui Dairy. And it was. . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-41-1-92; SIDE ONE

MK: This is the continuation of the interview with Mrs. Ruth Yamaguchi at her home on June 19, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

We were just talking about the Wai'alaie Nui Dairy.

RY: I would think it was located in the area where the golf course is now. The Wai'alaie [Country Club] Golf Course. I remember there used to be a road going down, way down toward the seaside, and there used to be another dairy there. And there were acres and acres of their field for the cattle. So a lot of the families that worked for that dairy, the children also came to Wai'alaie School. Plus the families in the Kaimukī area.

MK: Then you mentioned it was primarily, you had a lot of Japanese but how about Hawaiians, Chinese, Portuguese?

RY: In my classroom, I remember we had Portuguese children, some Chinese, Hawaiian.

MK: Would you know what their families were doing?

RY: I really don't know what their families were doing. I remember one boy's family had a store, this Chinese boy, his family had a store somewhere in Kaimukī. And couple of the Portuguese children, I think their fathers worked for what was the City and County [of Honolulu], or whatever it was called at that time. But the Hawaiian families, I can't remember what the Hawaiian families used to do. 'Cause they might have been working, some for the other dairy, but I didn't get to know too many Filipino children. There was one

Filipino neighbor, and their father worked for dairy also. But those children were either---one was in my sister's class and the older one was, I think, in my older sister's class.

MK: And then you know at school, did you and your sisters and brothers mix a lot with the other kids? Was it mostly playing with Japanese kids or was it mixing a lot with different kids?

RY: For us some of the Japanese children stayed with their own group. It was like any community, they seemed to be sort of a clannish friendship. And those kids in that area played together. My father was a type that had all kinds of friends. He had Chinese friends, he had very good Chinese friends. There were some that were real good Filipino friends, plus some *Haole* guys. So we didn't distinguish food. Only later in our life did we find out we were eating Filipino food, okay, or something Hawaiian or something Chinese. But when you kids, food is food, you didn't distinguish the different dishes, not like now. So we never knew what kind of food (we were eating). But later on we found out, that wasn't Japanese food, that was Filipino food. I said, "How come we got to eat Filipino food." It was because my father's Filipino friend brought it over or gave it to him. But because we used to mingle with so many different nationalities, I didn't think anything about playing with different kids. But like I said, the Japanese tended to play more with Japanese kids. And because they weren't too many other nationalities, it was natural that you got to play with your own nationality. But sometime of course, when you play as a group, all the children were all mixed, so you would play with anybody.

MK: And then I was wondering, in Wailupe, like you said your dad had a lot of friends that were not Japanese, yeah? You folks mixed. I know that in some communities where there are quite a few Japanese, they had special Japanese things like *Tenchō-setsu* or *Oshōgatsu* or Boys' Day, Girls' Day. Did you folks do that kind of stuff?

RY: I remember *Oshōgatsu* now. My grandma made sure that she's going to cook a big pot of *ozōni*. Only in my later life was I to find out that with different *ken* you had different kinds of *ozōni*. I have an interesting story about the *ozōni*. But anyway, she used to always make *ozōni*. And in those days every family made a lot of food, a lot of food. And when New Year's came you got to wear, each family had each child's kimono. And we got to dress in those kimonos. And you were allowed to go and visit as far as you wanted to go within the valley, in the homestead. You went to greet everybody. *Babachan* would make sure you have to bow your head and greet them. It was something about the New Year greeting, "*Omedetō gozaimasu*." And she used to teach you to be sure to say that. And other kids and other families came to your home and sat down to eat and drink and they would continue on to another family. That part I remember of *Oshōgatsu*. And they would put *mochi* [for decorative and auspicious purposes]. My grandma made sure that the *mochi* was in my father's car and there was [a set of *mochi*] on the refrigerator—the refrigerator was very important—and the stove. And if you had a *butsudan*, they were sure to put one in the *butsudan*. But New Year's was a real joyful time when you got to wear those kimonos, where you got to go visiting all your friends. You can go into any house. And any of the homes were open to you.

MK: How about, like you mentioned, Kuakini Cummins, your neighbor. Did they participate in this kind of thing, too?

RY: Well, Mrs. [Emma Hind] Cummins was [a] Hind daughter and she used to come over to our house. She used to come over and eat the food. And Kuakini Cummins, oh yeah, anything

Japanese, he's going to find every excuse to come to our house because he wants my mother to put shoyu [*shōyu*] on his rice. He wasn't allowed that at home, I found out. He would make any kind of excuse just to come over and, "Mrs. Ishibashi, can you put shoyu on my rice." Sometimes I remember he and I would argue—children can be mean—I said, "Why don't you go home and eat at home."

"But I told you I don't have rice and shoyu at home."

And my mother would say, "Don't say such mean things. Let him eat."

And that was his favorite, that shoyu and rice. And because that wasn't served at home, he would find any excuse to come over. And sometimes Mrs. Cummins would send (the) maid, Nancy, to bring the boy back home. 'Cause he wouldn't go home. I would tell him, "You better go home, now." My mother would tell him, "Kuakini, it's late, you better go home. Nancy's looking for you."

"No, no, no, she's not." Every excuse.

MK: (Chuckles) He enjoyed it at your house?

RY: Yeah, he used to really enjoy (it). But then he had this fabulous collection. He had this fabulous collection of comics. And naturally, my sisters and my brothers would say, "Go visit Kuakini and he's gonna lend you." He would always say, "Oh, if she comes to my house and play I will lend you folks the comics."

Oh, they would talk me into going over there. "Go, go with Kuakini, he wants you to go over to his. . . . If you play with him he's gonna lend you those comics."

"Okay." They would talk me into it. So I would go, play games, or you know, listen to the radio, read comics with Kuakini. "Okay Kuakini, I have to go home now."

"No, you didn't stay long enough."

"Okay." And sometimes he would tell their maid, Nancy, "We want to have lunch."

"Oh, is it lunchtime, I have to go home."

"No, you're not going to go home for lunch. You have to stay here for lunch."

MK: Oh, my goodness.

RY: So, I end up having lunch. "Okay, I have to go home, now. You promised after lunch I can go home."

"Okay."

But he was smart, he would just lend me only so much comic, so that I would have to come back again if I needed some more comics.

MK: Oh my goodness.

RY: But then . . .

(Telephone rings.)

RY: . . . but then he was good too.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-42-2-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ruth Yamaguchi (RY)

July 16, 1992

Pearl City, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Yamaguchi at her home in Pearl City, Honolulu, O'ahu, on July 16, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, for today's interview, we're gonna be continuing about your life at Hind-Clarke Dairy homestead. And I know that we just spoke about your playing with Kuakini Cummins, and his visiting and eating at your house and everything. And I was wondering, what other children did you play with at Hind-Clarke Dairy Homesteads?

RY: Well actually, the Cummins family was the only Caucasian family that was real close to the Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead, 'cause they were at the entrance of the road. But the rest of them were mostly Japanese, until a Filipino family moved in, in one of the homes. And we also played with Juan and his brother. But the rest of them was mostly all Japanese.

But then, our home had a big lot with a big, big---they say it's a *nilo* plant. It was a huge, huge tree and we had a swing on it. So it seemed as though all the neighborhood kids came to play in our yard, 'cause if there's gonna be a baseball game, the only yard is our yard that you can play baseball. So they would come over to play baseball. And as far as I can remember, most of the kids came to our house to play. And if they were gonna go to the beach to go swimming, they would stop by, you know, "Come on, let's go to the beach." And then you just crossed Kalaniana'ole Highway and go through this lot, through the bushes and you go swimming. There were a lot of homes. And most of the kids would come down the road, pass our house, you know, go down to the beach. And that was one of the summer things that we used to always do, go down to the beach to go swimming.

MK: And what other things did you folks do as kids?

RY: Oh, we used to---I know my brothers, they used to always play cowboys and Indians, that was one of the things, you know. And, oh, there were lot of kids playing different things, like they would make stilts with sticks and that was one of the games they would play. All of them with the stilts and trying to walk around, I remember that. But the road was so junky that it was real hard to walk on the road with the stilts. So they would all come in our yard to walk around on the stilts.

And another one was---I can't remember what that sticky plant is. It's a bean, you peel the bean and it's got sticky gluey thing. They would put it on their feet and any kind of cans,

they would put that on and put that underneath our feet and go clop-clop-clop-clopping. And that was one of the games. I can't remember what that plant was, but it had this gooey, sticky thing. You could actually---it would stick on your feet and on the can. And until it wears out, you could be walking around on that. That was one of the things, yeah. Except for New Year's, everybody played fireworks. Everybody visited everybody's home. (We also played with marbles. Sometimes we would have a very big game going on with marbles.)

MK: And you were saying that most of them were Japanese kids.

RY: Most of them were Japanese family in the homestead. Now, there was another housing that belonged to Hind-Clarke Dairy, but those were mostly for bachelors. There were homes, but it seemed as though they were shared by more than one person, and usually it was males. And there were a lot of Filipinos in those groups, (and) Mrs. [Tomoe] Fukamoto used to do the cooking and the laundry for them.

MK: And those, you know, Japanese kids that you were playing with, they were all nisei?

RY: Most of 'em, right, right. Most of them were nisei, except the Kawano family. The Kawano family, the parents [Toshio and Yoshio Kawano, brothers who resided together], were nisei, so their children that's almost the same age as we were, they were third generation. But I can't remember any other family that was third generation here. All I know was the Kawano family.

MK: And like, when you folks played, were there like Japanese words used or was it mostly English and pidgin [Hawai'i Creole English]?

RY: It was mostly Pidgin English [Hawai'i Creole English], but a lot of them used Japanese words. So if we understood them, fine, you know, we know what. There were times we have to run home, find out what it is, run back so we know what they're talking about. But that's where the problem was, because *Babachan* knew a lot of Hawaiian, you know, because she had a lot of Hawaiian friends and she picked up a lot of Hawaiian words. And that's where the confusion came in for my family, where a lot of the Hawaiian words that we thought was Japanese was not Japanese. And then, there were some Okinawan families, yeah, like Mrs. Tamashiro, who was such a nice lady. She was such a nice neighbor. And there was a Oshiro family, Shizue Oshiro used to be my best friend. But then, their parents used different words, and it seemed as though they were Okinawan words, and we just could understand some of those words. And other kids could not understand it too. But even as early as---that was in the thirties, in those days, most of them knew who the Okinawan families were and it seemed as though a lot of times, they did not, the families did not want them to play with Okinawan families. But funny, we were neighbors and we always played with them. We went in and out of their homes, so I was surprised as one time I was told, you know, "Oh, we're not to play with you because you play with Okinawan kids."

But you know, in those days, you didn't know one name from another. And I remember, I went home to ask, "You know, I was told they cannot play with me because I play with Okinawans." I said, "Mama, what is that?"

I remember going home to ask. And my mother told me that, oh, Okinawan families are like the Oshiros and Tamashiros. And there was Shoken family, but there was only one daughter and one son, and they kept to themselves. They're real quiet family. They didn't have a

mother, but they kept to themselves. But that's when I found out that even though they're Japanese, they're Okinawan families, yeah. Until then, I didn't know the difference until somebody told me, "We're not to play with you because you play with Okinawan family."

MK: So after you were told that, what did you do?

RY: My mother said it's okay to play with them, you know. They don't want to play with you, fine, you know. Because the Tamashiro family was such nice family. And I remember Mrs. Tamashiro to this day, because she used to feed her children something like a rice pudding, you know, in the morning. It's made with rice and she puts sugar in it and milk in it. And I thought that was the most delicious thing I ever tasted. So I would always try to make the excuse to go there early to wait for the kids. And she would invite me in to have breakfast. And I wanted to get there early, you know, to wait so she would offer to, you know. And then my parents found out what I was doing, and they put a stop to it. My father said, "Mrs. Tamashiro, you know, is a widow." She was widowed. Her husband used to work for Hind-Clarke Dairy, but he died young. He said, "You're not to do that." So I couldn't go there anymore.

And then Mrs. Tamashiro found out, so she said—you know, she's so nice—she'd say, "It don't matter. Let her come and eat with the kids."

My father said, "You're not to do that."

But you know when you're young, you don't know who's struggling and who's not. So I couldn't eat that anymore. So I used to tell, "Mama, why don't you learn to make that?"

MK: It was like a close community then, yeah?

RY: It was, it was, yeah. It was a close community. We would know who is sick, who died, and the whole community would go to help. And I remember, there used to be a---my grandma and my mom used to always talk about it too, that within that community, there used to be a *tanomoshi* group. And if it was your turn to host it, I remember all the people come in to your house and there would be a lot of talking. And then my father said, no, he'll bid for the *tanomoshi*. And then that's when we first found out about *tanomoshi*. And he would say that, "No, if it's your turn, you get the money," you know. And if---you can use it for anything. And then the next time, it will be somebody else's turn. And I remember one time, I think it was my father's turn, but there was a family who was real sick, there was a member who was real sick and they needed the money. And so he said, oh, he gave it up, you know, to let that family have it first. And so I found out, oh, that's how the community helped each other. If there was a death in the family and that family needed the *tanomoshi*, you know, somebody would be willing to give it to that family.

MK: Were there any other organizations among the Japanese over there?

RY: I remember my grandma used to go to this church. And I found out that she used to belong in the Fukuoka *Kenjinkai*. But then, of course, I think when the war started that disbanded, but then we had moved away anyway. But then, my father, later on, when it got reactivated, reorganized, he was in it. And he told me, yeah, he went in it because his parents used to belong in it.

MK: Fukuoka *Kenjinkai*.

RY: Fukuoka *Kenjinkai*, mm hm. But in those days, they used to belong to a lot of church groups.

MK: What church group was your grandmother in?

RY: I remember my grandma used to go to that Pālolo Hongwanji. And one day, because the Fukuoka *Kenjinkai* usually had the meetings there, somebody told me, "Hey, isn't that your father's name up there?"

I said, "Where?"

And there's a wall with all these names listed. I said, "I wonder why my father's name is up there."

They said, "Oh, it's because he made a donation."

I said, "Oh, is that what you . . ."

And the man told me, "Yeah, you know, when they make a big donation, your name goes up there."

I said, "Oh."

So I happened to ask my father, and he said, yeah, because his mother had belonged to the church so long, you know, he made a donation in her name.

MK: Oh, I see. So your grandmother was active in the Pālolo Hongwanji.

RY: Mm hm, mm hm, yeah.

MK: So did she go to church on a regular basis?

RY: I think so because I remember my father always taking her somewhere, and she would get dressed up and go. And I would say, "*Bāchan*, where did you go?"

She said, "*Otera ittayo*" ("I went to the temple"). So I take it, you know, it was that church.

MK: How about your dad and you folks? Did you folks go to the [Pālolo] Hongwanji when you were small?

RY: I remember we used to go, not for services maybe, but for---I remember my grandma wanted to have a service for my grandfather. And I guess every so many years they would have a service and we had to go and grandma would say, no, we have to go. And my mom would dress us and we all had to go. And we used to go, get so restless because the *Bonsan* is praying, and "When is it gonna end? Can we go outside?"

My father would say, "No, you just sit there! Don't you go outside now."

And we thought that—for us, you know, even if it's one hour, it was like a half-a-day service.

We were so bored, and it's so long. And I remember they used to take flowers and I remember they used to take *mochi* or---I remember one time, my father taking bag of rice. And then I found out, a lot of offerings are given to the church. Like in rice, or in sake, yeah. Because I remember seeing a lot of bag of rice sometimes. I say, "Oh, you know, *Babachan*, look at all the rice, *dare ga taberu no*" ("Oh, you know, Grandma, look at all the rice, who's going to eat it")?

And I thought it was that they were gonna have a party or something, and they were getting the rice ready. I said, "Oh, when is the *yobare*?" you know.

My grandma said, "*Yobare de wa nai, are wa Bonsan no rice yo*" ("It's not a party. That's the priest's rice").

I really thought we were gonna have a party or something. Bags and bags of rice. So I thought they were getting ready for a party. But, no, I found out it's, people used to make, rather than money, they used to give the rice or sake.

MK: You know, you mentioned, like, your dad would give *mochi* sometimes. Did you folks used to have a *mochitsuki*, or something like that?

RY: Yeah, I remember before they used to *tsuku mochi*, you know. They would---I remember, I think it was Mr. Morita who had a *kama* and they used to all get together and *tsuku mochi*, yeah.

MK: And on what occasions would you have a *mochitsuki*?

RY: It was New Year's, before New Year's.

MK: Did you folks do other Japanese things, like Boys' Day celebrations, or Girls' Day celebrations?

RY: Oh yes. Because I remember my grandmother saying that my older sister, because she was the first girl, she had a lot of dolls. And so I asked, "Well, where's my dolls?" you know.

But she told me that usually it's for the first girl. It was in those days, I guess, they couldn't afford for every little girl, so they would take out all the dolls for each time, you know, a Girls' Day came. And I wanted to know which was my doll. And I remember my sister saying, "That's not your doll, that's my dolls."

And I cried, because I told *Babachan*, "Where's my doll?" I thought everybody was gonna get a doll.

She said, "*Minna no doll yo*" ("They're everyone's dolls").

But my sister said, "No, that's my dolls."

So then when I got to learn that, if you're the third girl, you get all the hand-me-downs, and you have, that's not your thing, it's your sister's thing, but then she's gonna share with you, but you cannot claim it as your own. And I remember my brother below me now, he was the first boy child. My mother said it was such a big celebration in the family because my

grandmother. My grandmother, at Boys' Day had several banners, but in those days, the whole community gave something for the child.

MK: Oh.

RY: I remember, he had so many fish flying, you know. And in those days, they had those banners. Flag, a long, long flag. And they put it on a post and they had several of it for my brother. But I found out almost everybody in the community would bring you a gift.

MK: Oh.

RY: And he, being the first boy, had a lot of, you know, dolls and I remember those fishes and those banners flying.

MK: So your family did celebrate things like *Oshōgatsu*, Boys' Day, Girls' Day.

RY: Mm hm, mm hm, yeah. And I remember on Girls' Day, my family had certain kind of *mochi*, or *manju*, or whatever, you know. And I remember waiting for that day because we get to eat those things. But the longer you wait, it seemed as though it never came. And then Boys' Day, they had different kind of---I remember they had different kind of *mochi*. Even the Girls' Day, I remember those triangle, pink-looking, and white ones. And Boys' Day was different. I remember, I think my brother's, he used to have this green-looking seaweed. And nobody wanted eat that, when you a child. Oh, it didn't taste so good. But now you wish you had those. I found out, I think it was seaweed, yeah.

MK: Oh, interesting. And then, did you folks do things like the Emperor's Day, *Tenchō-setsu*?

RY: I don't remember that one. Maybe somebody in the neighborhood did. Maybe my grandmother did, but maybe that's when she used to. . . . No but, to celebrate that, you wouldn't put things on the *butsudan*. I don't remember that, Emperor's Day.

MK: And I think you mentioned you went to Japanese[-language] school, yeah.

RY: Mm hm.

MK: Which Japanese school did you go to?

RY: Wai'ālae Japanese[-language] School, yeah.

MK: And what were your feelings about Japanese school, going to Japanese school?

RY: Oh, I didn't like it. I guess because my parents spoke English to us, and it was, oh, it was so difficult for us. I remember it was so difficult. And there was another third generation girl with us, but she was real brilliant. She was---although she was a third generation, she was really, really good in Japanese. And that used to amaze me, because I remember, I asked Harriet, whether they spoke Japanese at home. She said, no, her parents spoke only English. And naturally, now, she went to Ali'iōlani School, that was an English standard school. So she was real good in her English, plus in Japanese. And that really amazed me to know, and I remember. But then, as I used to think, oh, why am I such a confused child that I cannot grasp Japanese? And I used to always go to my grandma, "Grandma, what is this?" you

know. "*Bāchan*, what is this?"

And she would explain, but by the time I went to school, I had forgotten.

MK: And then how many of your siblings, in your family, went to Japanese school?

RY: My sister said, now, she went through to the ninth grade, my oldest sister. My second sister is the one who had problems, and when the teacher called her a dumb Japanese, and she came home crying, my father said, "You don't need to go."

And I had wished the teacher would call me a dumb Japanese so I didn't have to go to school. And I said, "Oh, you know, Dad can I drop out too?"

He said, "No, you go."

And every day I would wish the teacher would call me dumb, you know, so I could go home and cry to my father. But in my sister's case, it was a man teacher, I remember, called her that. And it would be just my luck, I never had a man teacher. And the woman teacher would be so patient. And she knew I was third generation. But I think like, in my whole class, I think there must have been about three or four of us. And she would tell me, "If the others can do it, you can do it." Oh! (Chuckles)

But I remember, it was so hard for me in Japanese school.

MK: Did the younger ones go too, your younger siblings?

RY: No, I don't remember my brothers going to Japanese school.

MK: And then, in Japanese school, you know, some people have told me they were taught ethics, you know, *shūshin*.

RY: Oh, and manners?

MK: Yeah, manners, and rules.

RY: I remember that was so strict. Manners was so strict. And as soon as you go to class, you have to stand up and bow, you know, yeah. And you always had to greet *sensei*. Yeah, I remember that. Manners were really, really strict. They were real strict. And another strict thing I remember was sewing. On Saturdays we had to go sewing, and I struggled. And good thing *Babachan* would sometimes tell me, "No, no, no." She used to be strict in that she would make me take it off, because she said it's trying to finish, you take the biggest stitch. She said, "No, no." And she would teach me the right way. And there's a right way of doing it where Japanese do not take the *hari* out.

MK: Oh.

RY: But to this day, I remember *Babachan* saying, "You don't take the needle out." You know, to pull it out, to get the string. See, "You don't do it." So I go to the very end until I pull it out. To this day, I have that habit now. I never, never pull the needle out.

MK: That's from Japanese school training and your grandmother.

RY: Yeah, yeah. I used to take the needle out, and go through like that. And *Babachan* would say that's why my stitches go crooked, because I take the needle out. And she used to make me take it all off again. And, you know, when you're a child, you're gonna make this big knot, make sure it won't come off. You know, she said, "You don't make that big knot." And she would teach me how to make the knot. So to this day, I have certain things that I remember *Babachan*, and I appreciate that now, yeah. I really, really appreciate that.

MK: Kind of stayed with you, yeah.

RY: Yeah. Especially that needle, not to take it out. And I notice your stitches go straighter, yeah. It doesn't have that slant in this here. And I was surprised that my girlfriend noticed that.

MK: So when you were small, did you take any other Japanese culture-type lessons? Like some girls had, like, *odori*, dancing, or they had flower arrangement, or some even learned calligraphy. Did your family ever do those things?

RY: No, we did not. We did not. I remember a lot of the friends went to—I think in Japanese school they taught—I thought my sister took flower arrangement. I think there was a teacher teaching that, I remember. But I was only in that sewing, and I used to hate it, until I made my first kimono, after struggling. I was so proud of that kimono. Yeah, yeah. I think that material is called *yukata*. Yeah. I finally finished it. And I was so proud.

MK: And, like, in your family, did you folks wear kimonos on a regular basis?

RY: No. Only on New Year's. It seemed my grandmother, when she went to Japan, she brought back kimono for us, and we used to treasure that. And I still have a kimono of my childhood, yeah. And Grandma—in those days, there used to be *Hanamatsuri*, or something. And I remember Grandma entered me in that, and they paint your face, and they put the cap on, you know, in the kimono. And I was so frightened that I thought that we had to march and they gonna take me away. And I cried and cried and cried that I wanna get out, you know. And *Babachan* would say, "No, no, no, you stay there!"

And we had to all walk in a group, yeah. We're all dressed up and with this little hat, with all this little things, the flowers. And my mother had kept my kimono for me, and I still have it, yeah. When we had packed our things, things that we weren't gonna use, we had packed it in certain boxes. And for me, those things were not important, and I left it outside of the house [after the family moved to Pu'uoloa]. My mother would say each day, we would bring in boxes and unpack. But then when we started school, we were so busy I didn't have time to go look to, except for what I wanted. And I think it was left outside of the home and my father was able to bring it (when we had to evacuate). That's why we still have my grandmother, my mother's, that kimono with the *mon*, and my kimono. So in that part, I guess we were fortunate that I didn't think it was important, and I left it outside. And I would tell my mother, "No, no, no, we don't need all those things yet. We'll look through it later."

And my mother, being worried about my brother in the hospital, and she wasn't in the best of health, so she wasn't about to bring those things in to look through. She would just bring whatever my brothers needed or whatever we needed. And I guess that was one of the fortunate things that happened, that we still had those family heirloom, how little it is.

MK: It was fortunate that it wasn't brought into the house.

RY: Like my grandmother's things that she had from Japan. When you're a kid, you know, you're not gonna think about those things. "Oh no, *Babachan*, we don't need that, leave it there yet." And we left lot of the things outside. (That's why) my father was able to bring it, (but) it turned out to be a family heirloom. That's why we have lot of *Babachan* things yet, old things, yeah.

MK: That's fortunate, yeah.

RY: Yeah. So from one misfortune, a fortunate thing did happen, yeah. So there is a rice pot with that outer lip, I remember. Well, I remember Grandma having more than one. So the one that we were able to save, because my youngest brother saves antiques. We made sure and gave it to him. And there was an old kerosene lamp. It's made out of glass, and even where the kerosene goes in, you can see it right through (the) glass. And so, we said, the only one who should have it is my brother, the youngest one, because when *Babachan* was old and she was already sick, he was the only one left at home with my mother, and he helped take care of my grandmother, with my mother. So we said he deserves it, so we gave it to him. He's got Grandma's things.

MK: Oh. So I guess it was, like you said, a fortunate thing.

RY: Yeah, so when I look back, I think, well, out of the misfortune, you know, some good things came out (of it).

MK: And you know, I know I asked if you folks wore kimonos, how about your grandmother? Was she still wearing kimonos back then?

RY: I've never seen my grandmother in kimono (as an everyday wear), except when she wanted to go to church or—other than that, she had those old-fashioned clothes. Those old-fashioned clothes was, there was opening in the front, you had a button or a snap, and sleeve, about quarter-sleeve, and it's just like a sack clothes, you know, one-piece clothes, and just with a collar. She always wore those. Or she had those wrap-around *hakama*. Yeah, wrap-around *hakama*, and sort of like a shirt, blouse. And she always had an apron on.

MK: Always working.

RY: Yeah. She always had that apron on, yeah. And no matter what, she always, I remember seeing her with an apron. I guess so that the clothes wouldn't get dirty. But kimono, not unless there was an occasion that she wanted to go to church or somewhere. She didn't, I've never seen her in a kimono. And even then, she would have one of those dressier dress. She would go visiting with that dress.

MK: And I know you went Japanese school, yeah. For your English-language school, I know you went to Wai'alae, and you talked about some of the kids there. But how about the teachers there, how were they? Would you remember some of their names, or anything particular about them?

RY: I remember Mrs. Eklund, she was really, really nice. And there was a Mrs. Nelson, and she was more of an elderly woman, but she was so patient. And she was really, really nice. Mrs.

Eklund was more on the perky side. She always dashing around, but she was real funny, but she was also nice. Those two teachers I remember because they never, ever brought up any racial things. Well, she didn't care whether you Chinese, you Hawaiian, yeah. They never brought race up, I remember.

MK: And you said at Kaimukī, so you were about eighth grade or older?

RY: I was already in the eighth grade.

MK: And then as a youngster, I was wondering, how much education did you eventually finish? Like, how many years did you actually complete of school?

RY: I think I went to ninth grade and I think I was in the tenth grade, I was working and going to school. But then, I remember in April, in the tenth grade, I dropped out.

MK: Why did you drop out?

RY: Because I saw my father struggling so much. Because the evacuation [of RY's family during World War II] and everything had set him back so much. And I remember that he had medical bills to pay on my brother who was constantly (ill). He was in the hospital from the time that he was born until sometime in October, we were able to bring him home. But then in November, he went back into the hospital. And I remember, December 7, he wasn't at home, until my mother was so upset. She was so sure that, being so close to Pearl Harbor and with all that bombing and everything, we were going to die. She said, "No, bring baby home."

And I remember he couldn't go on that day, it was too dangerous. And he went (to the hospital) next day, to bring the baby home. And my mother's thought was that if we're gonna die, you know, she want the baby to be with us, go with us.

MK: And . . .

RY: And I know he had a lot of doctor bills to pay and everything. And so I decided that I would help out. But the lady [who wanted to employ RY]—the lady she was desperate [for hired help]. She was a divorcee, and she was a secretary to one of the vice presidents of Castle & Cooke [Ltd.].

MK: Oh.

RY: So she did have a good job, but then she had two boys. So I worked for my room and board, and she would pay me. But then, she was able to get me into [Dietz] Commercial School while working and going to school. She made arrangement, that she would keep me, I would help her out with the kids and the work, yet I would go to school. And I would be, it would be enough time that I would leave the school, pick up the kids and come home. So she made that arrangement. But it was quite hard going to commercial school just like that. But that . . .

MK: So, how long did you go to commercial school?

RY: That was for a short while [approximately, six months], until the landlady of that court that

she lived in mentioned about a full-time job that I could get.

MK: Oh.

RY: She [the landlady] says she could get me in now, so then I told my father about it. And so I told (my employer) about it. So she said, well, give her enough time for her to find somebody. So I think it took another two weeks, she did find an elderly woman that would live with her. She [the elderly woman] did not have any family, and she said she would move in with her and help her. And so she told me to go, go apply for the job. And would you believe it, I got the job. I couldn't believe it! I figured, well, I'll go part-time to school yet, hang in. They might only take me for a part-time [job]. But then . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Okay, you can continue.

RY: So when I realized that they wanted someone full-time, and I was able to get the job, I just continued on, working full-time.

MK: And, how about your sisters, your older sisters, how much education were they able to get?

RY: My older sister [Gladys] was working and going to commercial school. She went to business school, and she graduated from the business school. My second sister [Helen] now, I think right out of—I'm trying to think now. I think she quit it just before she graduated, to help out too.

MK: And how about your brothers?

RY: My brothers all graduated from high school. Richard went into the service after high school. Then Irwin graduated from St. Louis [High School] and went into the service. Now, Tommy also graduated, then he went into the [U.S.] Air Force. But then, of course, the war was over, by the time they went into the service. I think my brother, Richard, went into the service and the war ended, but he had volunteered, so he had to stay in four years. Then my brother, Irwin, also volunteered, so he stayed in too. Then Tommy, Tommy graduated from school and he went into the [U.S.] Air Force. And he also volunteered. But now, Richard, after getting out of the service, he lived in California and he went to—I remember, he was attending college at night. Then Tommy also lived on the Mainland with Richard. And he went to Northrop Institute. And now, Tommy was the one who was the pilot. So he continued going to school while working too. And after he got married, he also went to instructors' school, because he found out that, as an instructor, you could get better pay. So he was instructing for a while, until this Mississippi chemical company was looking for a pilot. And I think the pay was pretty good, and he went to work for them. But then, that's when he was in a plane crash and he died.

Now, Kenny, that's the youngest one, who was—I always thought he was on the brink of death, more than being alive. He graduated, he went on to University of Hawai'i. And he was

an art student. Then he won a scholarship to a school in New York. So he went off to New York, on the scholarship. And he lived in New York for a while, then he went into (the service). By then the Vietnam War started, so he volunteered. And I think his idea was that he would go to Vietnam, see action. But he got stuck in the—with an intelligence group. So he never ever got to Vietnam anyway, no matter how much he wanted to go to Vietnam. He got stuck with this intelligence group and it seemed as though he had to travel a lot with the group. Trying to interview Cubans. I remember once, he said that he had to go to Canada, somewhere around the border of Maine and the Canadian [border]. And he found out that, oh, those people were very suspicious of him, being an Oriental. And I think he was doing some intelligence work and army thought that being Japanese, they might open up to him. He said it was very difficult, they're real suspicious people, yeah. I remember him saying that.

MK: And, you know, I was wondering, were the children, all of you, able to fulfill the kinds of expectations that you had for your lives?

RY: Well, I guess my brothers did. I'm sure my brothers did.

MK: And then, like, what kind of expectations did your parents have for you folks, in terms of schooling, careers?

RY: Well, my father thought that, you know, most of us probably would have gone on to school. But I was—at that time of my life, I wasn't disappointed that I had to quit school to help out. When I found a full-time job, oh, I thought I was so lucky. Then continued on that lot of my supervisors, in fact, all the supervisors were Caucasian. But I was surprised they encouraged you to take the classes, or there would be so many manuals to read, you know. "Read that manual, study it." And as it went on, even after the war, they offered a lot of classes. And so I was able to go into different classes.

MK: So what kind of work did you do?

RY: I started off with salesclerk [at Fort Ruger with the Hawaiian Army Exchange, now known as AAFES-Hawai'i, or Army and Air Force Exchange Service-Hawai'i]. This manager used to teach me a lot. So when there was a job opening to manage the [Fort] DeRussy Exchange, she said, "Take it, you can do it."

So would you believe it, I took it and I stayed on and on, until I got married [to Harry Yamaguchi in 1949] and I was going to go on to maternity leave. And so I had to quit, because I went on maternity leave. And my husband was against leaving the baby with somebody else, "No you stay home and take care of the baby."

Then I had—the first one was Dennis [born in 1952] and I had Theresa [in 1954]. So I stayed home to take care of them. But then, the officer in charge was real nice. He said he's gonna give me a letter of recommendation, "In case you wanna come back anytime." He gave me an award and he gave me the letter. He said, "You can come back anytime."

So then, by then, my husband had started working at Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard]. So we decided to buy a home. And now, Dennis was already starting school, and Theresa was about four years old. So my sister-in-law, who lived next door, said, you know—she couldn't go to work 'cause she had another baby. So she said she would watch Theresa and Dennis after school, "You go to work."

So I went back to the exchange. And so I went back as a salesclerk, so that way, in case the kids were sick, it was easy for me to take off. And I know that you're not going to stay there after eight hours, I'm going to come home. So he says, "All right, if that's your job, then take it."

So we were able to buy this home. And my sister-in-law took care of my kids. And within a year, she had bought a home and the kids were going to go to Pearl City [Elementary] School anyway. So she was able to take care of the kids too. And now, working at [Fort] Shafter, now, a man who had a high position in the exchange service got to be manager of this company in town. And he asked me to come and work for him. So after thinking about it, I said, "All right."

So I went to work for him. But within three years, (although) he was a young man, he was dying of cancer. And he could not fight the cancer, and he died. Then there were series of different bosses coming in, so, but in the meantime, my friend called me. She said, "There's an opening in the exchange system at Hickam [Air Force Base], it's in the office. Why don't you take it?"

And I knew the boss. And he said, "Go apply for the job. Come back to the exchange."

And at her coaxing, I decided to come back to the exchange. Thereafter, I went to work in the office.

MK: Oh.

RY: Yeah.

MK: And you stayed with the exchange system [AAFES-Hawai'i].

RY: Yeah, I stayed with it. So that with the total years that they had given me credit, it was, I put in thirty-six years.

MK: Wow, long time, yeah.

RY: So I went from administration clerk and operation clerk, and yeah. And there were lot of times that headquarters would have openings, and they would tell me, you know, "Take the opening. You can do it."

But then on my second time, I thought to myself, now I'm getting older, you know, I would rather stay where I enjoy the group and the work hours were real good. And it was from Monday to Friday, and at the depot we would start at seven and quit earlier. At one time, we even started six-thirty. But then, some of the younger mothers, who had younger kids, it was difficult for them. So they decided, all right, some can start at 7:00 and 7:30, and the hours were ideal. It was so close for me to go to Hickam, or even to Sand Island. So I said, "No, I'll just stay put."

But stayed with it for thirty-six years, after the initial employment.

MK: So you retired in what year?

RY: Nineteen eighty-seven.

MK: And I noticed that, like, you worked for the federal government [exchange system], yeah?

RY: Mm hm.

MK: And your brothers, they volunteered for military service.

RY: Mm hm.

MK: Did they ever voice their feelings about volunteering for military service, while, you know, your family had been displaced by the federal government during the war?

RY: That was the strange part. My brothers all volunteered, and even when the Vietnam War started—of course Ken didn't know anything, he didn't know much about the evacuation. We never talked about it. He knew we got evacuated, but the family didn't emphasize their life on it. What's past is past. And my mother never used to discuss all those things that we had gone through. And so my brothers never thought too much about it. But they thought as being boys, you know, they had to do their duty to their country. Because, after the war, the Korean conflict came up. And now, like, Richard was caught in that Berlin Crisis, where Berlin was divided. And the only thing, the planes could go in to go into the western section of Berlin. He was in that. And I remember one time he wrote home, said that the plane that they were on, they changed crews. They were supposed to continue on, but then the officer says, "No, get off," they'll put another crew in it. And they were able to rest.

But the plane crew that went on that plane crashed. And my brother wrote saying that he was supposed to be on that plane until the officers decided that crew needed rest, so he had put in a replacement crew. He said, "Would you believe it, that plane crashed."

And that was the only time I remember he said he got real shaken up. But other than that, now, looking back, we said, "Oh my goodness, the military evacuated us. The military took over everything, we lost everything to the military. And yet, all three girls were employed by the military."

MK: And all the sons.

RY: All three girls retired from the government. And so we---one day, we were talking about it. We had to laugh about it. Oh, you know, the military did injustice to us, and yet the military gave us employment. The military gave us retirement, and we benefit from that now. We talked about it and I said, "You know, out of the misfortune, a good fortune came by."

MK: Kind of ironic, yeah.

RY: Yeah, that's just what we said, "How ironic, the military did so much to us, and yet the military employed us and we were able to retire." So all three girls get good benefits from retiring from the government.

MK: And the four—all boys went to military service, voluntarily.

RY: Went to, yes, mm hm, yeah.

MK: Now, another question I wanted to ask, you know, about that time, I think you mentioned that, like, your father was a nisei. He had dual citizenship though.

RY: Yes.

MK: He had Japanese citizenship and American citizenship.

RY: Yes.

MK: And what happened to his citizenship status. I think you talked about there was a big uproar in your household that you remember.

RY: I remember one time, oh, *Babachan* was so upset and *Babachan* was scolding my father. And I remember asking my mother, "Why is *Babachan* so mad?" You know.

And she say, "It's because your father found out he had dual citizenship." And in those days, as a youngster, you didn't think too much about what's dual citizenship. My mother said, "He is born in America, he is an American citizen, yet he's registered in Japan. So Japan can call him into the army, anytime they want to."

I said, "No they cannot, he's an American citizen. No way can Japan call him and say."

"No, when you're a dual citizenship, you must report what your status is."

So upon finding that out, my father went down to the Japanese consulate, cut off his dual citizen. He told them, "No, I'm an American citizen, I'm not a Japanese citizen."

And he came home with the paper. And when my grandmother found that out, oh, she was so angry. I remember her scolding him and she was grumbling, and so much commotion. Then I found---and I thought my father did the right thing. But there was another part to it that we didn't understand, it was my grandmother's part. She said that he being the only child, and he was the male child, he, the property in Japan was in his name, but when he did that, Japan no longer was obligated to have that land for him. And so she said, in other words, she has no home.

MK: Oh.

RY: That she has no home, that she won't be able to go back to Japan. And I remember comforting her. I said, "*Bāchan*, you don't need to go back to Japan." You know. For us, we're thinking that, oh, *Babachan* no way you---no, no, no, you cannot go to Japan. You have to stay here with us. But as a child, you don't understand a person's feeling their homeland is their homeland, you know. And we used to comfort, "*Babachan, shinpai nai*" ("Grandma, no problem"), you know. "You're gonna stay here, live here with us. You don't need to go to Japan. Japan *dare mo oran kara. Kaeren demo e*" ("You're gonna stay here, live with us. You don't need to go to Japan. In Japan you have no one there. You don't have to return"). You see.

But we didn't understand her part, that she is a Japanese, and her homeland is Japan. But she is trying to tell us that when my dad did that, now she cannot go back to Japan. You see, but what we didn't understand was that she has no right to go home to her homeland now, to that

family. She no longer has ties because her husband is dead. She was an Ishibashi. Her husband died, but as long as that land was in my father's name, he was still an Ishibashi. Japan doesn't think too much about a female who's a widow. And if her son, or there's no family ties now with Japan, they don't think much about you coming back to that family, you see. That was the part, as a child, I didn't understand until, as you grew older, and you started to read a lot of Japanese books, you know. And that's how Japan is. That it made a lot of difference. And I didn't know how much that was stressed until I heard about my mother-in-law's thing. That once you're a widow, you know, that family has no ties with you, yeah. Especially if you did not have a child carrying on the name. So it seemed as though she had cut—when my father did that, all ties with the Ishibashi family was cut off to her.

MK: And your father did this before World War II started.

RY: Right, right.

MK: Cutting off the citizenship.

RY: It was in 1940, mm hm.

MK: And it was in 1940 that your father was a milkman, yeah, a dairyman at Hind-Clarke.

RY: Yes.

MK: And he took out a loan from the Farm Security Administration [U.S. Department of Agriculture]?

RY: He took out a loan with the Farm Security Administration and purchased the land there.

MK: Okay, I was wondering, why did he take out that loan to purchase land in Pu'uloa? Why did he want to get, go into farming at that time?

RY: Well, it seemed as though farming was coming up. And but on his own, he figured that he could not just go and buy land. And when he heard that Pu'uloa was being opened and Farm Security Administration was opened, that's how he got into it. [At that time, Hind-Clarke Dairy was in transition. There was a change in management.] And the thing in those days, in the late thirties, forties, unions were coming up. And he knew that the union was trying to get into the dairy. And he thought that maybe he would be better off, the way things were going, that if he goes into farming, and have his own land. You see.

MK: Oh, I see.

RY: While living at, now, Hind-Clarke, my grandmother having chickens, she was a chicken farmer. And I remember my father was starting to buy pigs. And started to fence up, you know, an area. And he was taking care of the pigs part-time. And I think that's when he decided that farming would be the best thing. And pig farming was coming up, you see. So he had started to buy some prize pigs.

MK: And, you know, when he took out the loan, do you know about how much of a loan he took out?

- RY: According to the documents, I found out he and my mom had signed for 9.1 acres of land, and plus the house, the brand-new house that was being built. I thought (it) read \$5,000.
- MK: And I was wondering, how come he bought land out in Pu'uloa? It seemed so far away from where he was accustomed to.
- RY: Well, I thought it was because farmland already was being scarce. Because, like, Hind-Clarke Dairy, no way was he able to—I thought maybe he wasn't able to buy land there. And most of the land at that time was owned by Bishop [Estate]. Bishop, Campbell Estate, Dowsett [Estate]. But then, that land was owned by Dowsett. And Farm Security Administration was able to purchase it for farm purposes, (from) Dowsett. I don't think there were too many land open to Japanese people. But Dowsett in Pu'uloa was open, that was one area.
- MK: And how big was the property again, that he purchased?
- RY: He had two lots, and the total came out to 9.1 acres.
- MK: In comparison to other people who bought lots in Pu'uloa, is that a lot or regular, or . . .
- RY: The average, I found out was—the average family had about five acres. So my dad's acres was large, and at that time, I didn't think anything of it. But I used to complain that, "How come, you know, the neighbors are so far?" You know, why couldn't they be next door?
- And I remember my father was saying it's because he has double lots. The [lots numbered] 680, 681, he had purchased two lots. And so naturally, being double lots, the neighbors are gonna be far. But we didn't think of it in terms of acres. I said, "But Dad, you know, how come our neighbors are so far?"
- MK: So, you know, in that beginning, when he first bought the land, what was there at Pu'uloa, when he first bought it, before you folks actually moved there? What was it like?
- RY: It was nothing but rocks and *kiawe* trees. It was just miles and miles and miles of *kiawe* trees. So each farmer had to cut down *kiawe* trees, clear the land, uproot all those *kiawe* trees.
- MK: So it wasn't just cutting it down . . .
- RY: It was nothing but . . .
- MK: . . . it meant uprooting . . .
- RY: No.
- MK: . . . digging them out.
- RY: To even build a home, you had to uproot all that *kiawe* roots, clear the land first. It was hard work. I remember my father's friend going weekends with their trucks. And I understand they used to pull the roots after cutting it down, hauling it to one side. They had to uproot the roots now, with the truck. And after that, my sister said, oh, she remembers all those rocks. No matter how many rocks you moved, it was so much rocks. My father built a stone wall for the pigs, that you could build a stone wall out of all the rocks, from your own property.

And there was so much trees, they would cut the trees, cut the lumber to make fences. You would be able to make walls and fences using the *kiawe* trees and the rocks from your own property.

MK: Oh. And before you folks moved there, were there anything like roads or water, or what was there?

RY: Each farmer had to dig a well. It was just brackish water. But each farmer had to dig a well and have a pump going, for irrigation or for water. But there were roads, I remember it was dusty, coral-looking roads. And there was another road on the side of our house for our next-door neighbor and the neighbor before them. And it was all dusty roads. But each farmer had to dig a well and have a pump going to get the brackish water. You see, each farmer had put in a lot of work, hard work.

MK: So even before your family actually moved there, your dad had cleared the land.

RY: Yes.

MK: And he had dug his well.

RY: He had dug his well. And the land that had to be cleared more was before the house got built. So there was a brand-new house. (Most) farmers had a brand-new house.

MK: And how was the house built? Did they contract with a private contractor to build it, or how was the arrangement?

RY: I think it was private contractors through the farm agency [Farm Security Administration], and part of the loans. And it was a beautiful house. It had a separate dining room, a living room, three bedrooms. And I remember the bathroom—my dad made it so that you go down the steps, and there would be a cement floor with shower and a bath, and where the laundry bin was, you know, where my mother's washing machine would go. So even no matter how dirty you came in the house, you could wash yourself first. And then, before coming into the house. It was like, what they call now, a mudroom. Yeah, yeah. And I really thought, oh, how appropriate, the name, mudroom, you know. Wash off all your mud in there.

But it was a nice house with a kitchen and---mm hm.

MK: And then, before you folks got in, was there electricity?

RY: Yeah, there was electricity. There was electricity running. So we did have electricity, 'cause we had a refrigerator and Mom had an electric stove. Mm hm. And we had electric lights. But it was just the drinking water, you had to go to a pumping station run by the 'Ewa Plantation [Company]. So there would be containers, my father would have like a tank thing with water. And the drinking water and cooking would use fresh water.

MK: How far away would you have to go for that water?

RY: Oh, I would say maybe about two miles. My dad knew where the pumping station was. It was in the middle of a cane field, and all the farmers went to go get their water there.

MK: So all he had on his own lot would be the brackish water for the crops.

RY: For the crops and the, for the farm. And, now this---the brackish water was into our plumbing, because the toilets and the dishes and everything would be. But I remember, they say it's brackish water, but it wasn't dirty water. Wasn't dirty water. But, of course, if you taste it, you know, you could taste salt, salt water in it. But we could do dishes and everything with that.

MK: Like bathing?

RY: Yeah. But the cooking and drinking, my father would always say, you know, "Drink it from this bottle." You know. I remember he had some kind of bottle thing. Yeah, uh huh.

MK: And the house itself was really nice, though.

RY: It was a beautiful house. And it was large house. And I told my dad, I still remember that French doorway, you know, the curved doorway, between the living room and the dining room. That I remembered.

MK: Did other people's houses look like that too, in that area? Were they, you know, of that grade?

RY: Yeah, yes. Everybody's homes were that. I imagine some of the farmers that was living way toward the highway, they had a different-looking homes. I imagine they had purchased the land earlier, probably not through Farm Security, or leased it, and they had different types of homes. But almost all the Farm Security homes were nice homes. They were nice homes.

MK: And the homes were contracted and built by carpenters then.

RY: Yes.

MK: Not the people who were gonna live there.

RY: No, no. Maybe some of 'em had built---maybe some of 'em had friends and they built their own. But my father had to contract it out. But he had friends to help clear the land. So the first part I think he had cleared was where the home was gonna be built and where the yard would be, 'cause all that area, to the road, was cleared. And further down was cleared, and the next one he cleared was the farm area, you know, where his piggery would be in.

MK: And, now I know that before you folks moved there, your father would go on the weekends.

RY: He would go weekends or, because he was a milkman, he started early in the morning, he would get off early, and he would be going down. So we never got to see him too much, until late, yeah, when he would come home.

MK: And it would be like---do you know about how many weekends he spent doing that, investing his time, preparing the place?

RY: It went on for months because on Fridays, he used to take my sister and my brothers and sometimes *Babachan* would go, after the home was built, because they have a place to stay.

You know, he had moved some of the things, and they could sleep there. And his friends, like Mr. Ishibashi—he was no relative—and another man, he asked if he could hire them. And they lived in the house and they helped him with the land.

MK: He did a lot then.

RY: Yeah. There was a lot of work done before the initial move.

MK: And so did your father work for Hind-Clarke Dairy until the time you folks moved?

RY: He worked until the time we moved, then he gave notice to him. Mm hmm, yeah.

MK: When were you folks told that, you know, that your father had bought the land and that you're gonna move to this farm in Pu'uloa?

RY: It was sometime in 1940, and by the summer I found out that we're gonna have to move and change school. And when you're that age, you know, you're very sensitive about starting at another school, making new friends, leaving old friends behind. And that was sort of traumatic for me. My brothers didn't think much about it. You know, they were younger. And I said, "No, Dad. No, I'm not gonna move, you know. I wanna stay here."

He said, "You can't stay here. Nobody's gonna be here."

I said, "But I'm not gonna move!"

And he would say, "You have to move, 'cause we're gonna all move."

So once I made up my mind, well, you know, to help my mom pack and everything, once you made up your mind, it wasn't that bad.

MK: And when did you folks actually move?

RY: In August of 1941.

MK: And when you folks moved to Pu'uloa, how did you folks do it? You know, nowadays we have moving companies that will help people move, you know. What did you folks have to do to move down to Pu'uloa?

RY: Well, my dad had owned a pickup truck, and he had owned a station wagon. So each time he was moving several things, each time he made a trip there, he took some things along. And most of the furniture that he had bought was new there. Either new or secondhand, but it was entirely different set of furnitures.

MK: Oh.

RY: You see. And the beds and everything. So that part was easy, he just had taken it there, directly. So there wasn't too much things left in our house, anyway, except for old tables and things, but he had bought a new dining room table, and the living room set was new. So we didn't have to move too much furnitures, it was just personal things, clothing, beddings, dishes, pots and pans. And my mother's *tansu*, and some of the beds and like a chest of

drawers, some of 'em, we had to move. But he had bought additional ones, so it was all in the house already.

MK: And was it just the family that helped with the move, or did other people help you folks move?

RY: I remember other people, his friends, were---there was another man who had a truck, I remember he used to move a lot of stuff. He would load his truck before he goes with my father, and unload it there, and he would help him with the farm.

MK: And then, when you folks were leaving Pu'uloa, did you have farewells to say to your—I mean, when you left Wailupe, did you have farewells to say to the people that . . .

RY: Oh yes. Some of my friends had already—like, the Mrs. Tamashiro, she had moved out already. She had lived in Wai'ala'e area in the 'Ō'ili [Road] area. And I remember we had gone to see her. And Mrs. Tamashiro, being the person she is, she made a big lunch and, you know, fed all of us, and I used to love the way she used to cook her pork with cabbage. And she made a big pot of it and cooked rice. She said, "No, you must stay for lunch." And I remember we stayed for lunch.

It was sad to say goodbye to friends like Mrs. Tamashiro.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-43-3-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ruth Yamaguchi (RY)

July 21, 1992

Pearl City, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Ishibashi Yamaguchi at her home in Pearl City, O'ahu, on July 21, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

I guess to continue our interview, you just mentioned that you remembered another *Haole* family with two boys, that your family was familiar with in Wailupe. Maybe you can continue with that.

RY: They were Frank and Peter Irvine. (Their) parents came from Germany and they were very, very strict. But they were allowed to play at our home, and they would come and go, but not like Kuakini Cummins where he wanted to eat dinner with us and everything. But they were real rascal, and they even traded a small little toy, talked my brother into giving up his car that Grandma had bought for him, and when Grandma found that out, she went over to their home, explained to the parents and got the car back. But there were several incidents with them. One time—oh, that big *milo* tree that we had, Peter, the rascal one, climbed on top of it with a cane knife. He found my grandmother's cane knife that she used to cut the weeds. And somehow he swung the cane knife and cut his leg. And the blood gushing out and everything. And we had to run to get his parents. But Mrs. Irvine just took it in stride, I was so amazed. She just took it in stride, she said not to worry. She wrapped his legs up. In fact, my dad had put a tourniquet on it to stop the bleeding. She just packed him in the car, and she says, "I'll take him to the doctor." And off she went.

And we thought Peter was gonna die! And we (cried) for Peter. And my mother was so upset, but Mrs. Irvine, no, she calmly took him to the doctor. Then later on she came back to tell, "Peter is all right, they stitched him up and bandaged him up, so he won't be coming for a while 'cause he can't walk." And, as though, you know, it was no big thing with her.

But Grandma was so concerned, she used to go over every day to see if there was anything he wanted. He said no, he's fine. And she found out that he was still—even with that injury—he had to be locked up to do the embroidery. And I thought to myself, ho, how can Mrs. Irvine be that way? You know. But I guess coming from Germany, they're different. They're—they don't pamper the kids that much. She takes things in stride. But it was so amazing to see embroidery done by the two boys. But like I said, the back of it amazed me more than the front of it. No matter how anybody can do it on purpose, I don't think they can come out with that kind of design and that kind of work in the back like a big mosaic. And I told Mrs. Irvine, "Oh, the back is real nice too."

She said, "Oh, how can you say that?" You know, "They're not very good. Until they get to be real good, they're gonna have to keep doing their embroidery."

And every day they got locked up an hour to do their embroidery. And I meant to ask my sister, because she found out Frank is married and lives somewhere in her neighborhood. And I was gonna tell Gladys, "Ask Frank if he still does his embroidery."

But that was really---I thought it was amazing.

MK: And the Irvines, were they employees at the dairy too?

RY: No, no, no. Mr. Irvine worked for a firm, a big firm downtown, somewhere, yeah. And there was a row of [home on the] right side as you go toward Hawai'i Kai, all those homes there, right next to the beach. And they had a home there, yeah. And they were the other two boys that was allowed to play with us. And they came quite often to play, but not like Kuakini Cummins, where he refused to go home until he had dinner with us. But Mrs. Irvine made sure her boys came home for lunch. She was very strict.

MK: And so, I know that your family was at Pu'uloa August 1941, yeah.

RY: We moved there, yeah.

MK: I mean you were at Wailupe until August 1941, when you then moved to Pu'uloa, right.

RY: Right.

MK: You know, I wanted to establish where is Pu'uloa?

RY: Pu'uloa was near the entrance---where my father's land was, it was close to the entrance of Pearl Harbor. There was a Fort Weaver Road, that was the main highway. And it curved, there was a curve around the beach, alongside the beach, then I do know there was a Fort Weaver military reservation. And our land was---you had to go in from Fort Weaver, into this dusty road, I would say maybe about two miles inward, toward Pearl Harbor.

MK: And did you have an address, or at least a road name at that time?

RY: Everybody called it Pu'uloa Road, the main road. But I don't think that was the official name, but everybody referred to it as Pu'uloa Road, and that was the main road. It was made mostly of coral, I remember, because it was whitish. And that was the only road that went through that area. But all the people did not have an address, everybody's address went by lot numbers. Lot number 680, 681 for my dad. The [Warren] Bingos had 679, and [Thomas] Kakazus was, I think, in the 700s, 670-something. But everybody went by lot numbers.

MK: And say at school, if another child asked you, "Where do you come from? Where do you live?" How did you---was there a name for the area, or what did you say?

RY: We say, "Oh, we live in Pu'uloa Farms." Everybody referred to it as Pu'uloa Farms.

Then they would ask, "Well, where is that?"

So we would say, "Oh, you have to go down Fort Weaver Road, and you gonna hit Pu'uloa Road, and you have to go in there." But it seemed even the kids in 'Ewa wasn't familiar with it. 'Cause they would always ask me, "Where is that?"

And when I say, well, I said, "It's---ours is close to Fort Weaver, and close to Pearl Harbor." And a lot of 'em did not even know Fort Weaver. So I thought to myself, wow, we're really in a remote area, you know. Even the kids in 'Ewa didn't know about it.

MK: And, you know, when you folks first moved to Pu'uloa, how many were there in your family? Who moved to Pu'uloa?

RY: My dad and my mom, Wataru and Susoe Ishibashi. His mother, Sei Ishibashi. Then myself, my brother, Richard, Irwin, and Thomas. Kent was still in the hospital, well, it was known as Japanese Hospital at that time.

MK: Is that the present Kuakini [Hospital]?

RY: Yes, Kuakini.

MK: And, you know, when you folks moved to Pu'uloa, how about your two older sisters, where were they?

RY: Now, Gladys---Gladys lived at a home of the Fukamotos. Now, Mr. [Jitsutaro] and Mrs. [Marjorie Tomoe] Fukamoto worked for Hind-Clarke Dairy. She ran the sort of a mess hall, kitchen for the bachelors. But they had owned a home on Claudine Avenue, which was occupied by this elderly German woman. And Fukamotos evidently kept her there and looked into her, for her well-being and everything. And they asked Gladys if she could move in with her, and keep an eye on Miss Ganz, who was old. And so the arrangement was made she would go to school, go home there and look into Miss Ganz, and she lived there.

Now, Helen had a place with the Hinds. Now that's the young Mr. Hind and his wife, Robson Hind. And she did housework for them, and in the meantime, she thought she would go back to school, but she decided, well, she wasn't sure, but she did live with the Hinds and worked (for) them.

MK: And then, when you folks moved to Pu'uloa, who were the families that were already there when you moved to Pu'uloa? Some of the families that you can remember.

RY: I remember two brothers, the Suyemotos [Satoru Suyemoto and his brother]. They weren't married. They were there. And Mr. and Mrs. Warren Bingo, they were our closest neighbor. They were a young couple, and they had a baby girl, Stella. And the only other one was---they weren't as near, because the land was so big in acres. I thought it was going to be blocks, until I found out it was acres, and it was the Thomas Kakazus.

MK: And was your family familiar with any of these families before moving to Pu'uloa?

RY: My dad knew them, my sister, Helen, and the boys knew the Bingos and the Suyemotos because they used to go during the summer months to help my dad clear the land and do some chores. And when the house was built, they stayed at the home and come home with Dad whenever they wanted to. They would be going back and forth. So they knew the Bingos

and the Suyemotos. My brother said they weren't familiar with the Kakazus, but my dad knew the Kakazus.

MK: And so, when you folks---when the rest of the family, you know, actually moved to live in Pu'uloa, was there any sort of welcome from these other families or . . .

RY: I remember Mrs. Bingo came over to talk to us, especially to Mom. Like I said, they were a real young couple, in their early twenties. But other than that, because the houses are so far apart, actually there was no one there. But the Bingos, my mom remembers, you know, going to talk to them, or sometimes she would come over with the baby. The Suyemotos, no, because they were young men. They kept to themselves. And the Kakazus of course, they had children but they were all young children. I found out his oldest daughter was five years old, yeah.

MK: And by their first names, can I assume that your neighbors were second generation at least?

RY: They were all second generation. Because, later on, I found out the lots in the back of my dad, I thought it was Mr. Kakazu's brother, but he said, no, that was his father.

MK: Oh.

RY: But I don't think he ever got a chance to build or live on his land. I think he stayed with Tom Kakazu while trying to clear his land and everything. But I don't remember---not unless he had built his home closer on the beach side. Closer to---not on the beach side, but closer to Fort Weaver. I don't remember seeing a house, but I understand the father was starting to clear the land, because sometimes I used to see people there. And they were cleaning the land and everything.

MK: So at that time, you know, were there---would you say there were quite a few people actually living in Pu'uloa, or mostly vacant areas being worked on or left vacant?

RY: No, I found out there were quite a number of farmers actually already lived there, because we would have to pass all these houses, and they were already living there, most of the farmers. But because we talking about acres, it seems so far, you know, that there weren't too many people. I remember complaining to my dad, "When are all these people gonna move in?" you know.

'Cause he would tell me that, "No, there's a lot of people who bought land."

I said, "Yeah, but Dad," you know, "the houses are so far away, when are the other people gonna move in?"

But he's talking about acres, and I'm talking about city blocks, you know. But it seemed mostly all of the farmers were occupying their homes and were on the land, but for a child, it seemed as though, "When are they gonna move in?" You know, yeah. But I found out they all lived there, most of 'em.

MK: And when you folks moved into your house, what did your lot look like? Did you have crops planted or what had been done to your property by that time? You had the house built . . .

RY: I remember the area where the house was built was all cleared, and Grandma was starting to form some kind of yard. And it was all cleared, and you could see the area where she started her garden. And further down would be where the pigpens were. It was quite far in, away from the home. But they had cleared almost all of the land there, and they had levelled it. There was quite a bit of work done.

MK: How about a well? Was the well . . .

RY: Yeah. There was a well. They had to dig—each farmer had to make sure to dig their well. That was one of the first things Dad said he had worked on, get the well, because no livestock could be moved in without the well. They needed the water.

MK: And how about any crops?

RY: Grandma, I remember Grandma had some vegetables growing. I remember the eggplant, yeah. She had eggplant and she had green onions and chives—what else did she have now? I remember she did have a garden growing already. Because Grandma was the type, she always got up early in the morning. All through my childhood I remember, she was up something like four, five o'clock in the morning. And she would start her own coffee, and it seemed by the time we got up, she was done with her breakfast and she was always out in the yard, puttering around the plants, her garden.

MK: How about your father? Was he able to plant anything by August 1941?

RY: No. My dad was too busy with the farm, setting up fences and—because if he was going to breed, he would need more pens. So he was kept busy with the piggery. And Grandma, just to putter around and furnish vegetables, she was more into the garden. And she had some of the chickens there. So my dad actually did not get into the farming part of the land, 'cause he was kept so busy with the piggery end of the farm.

MK: And, you know, you mentioned that, like, your father and other farmers had to clear their lots, were there areas still with a lot of vegetation, like *kiawe* trees, or that sort of thing? Or was—were they mostly cleared?

RY: Like my dad's property, there were lot of *kiawe* trees toward the back of the house, and all his piggery. There were lot of *kiawe* trees yet, where they had to cut it down. But most of the front area of his farm was all cleared. And, like, the Bingos, but there were still *kiawe* trees. Now, the Suyemotos, the boys had cleared most of their land, and yet there were some *kiawe* trees that you see, where they didn't get to clear it yet. The same as the Kakazus. My dad had cleared enough that we could look through to see Kakazus home, we could see them. And Mr. Kakazu had cleared most of his land, looking this way toward our home. But yet, he had *kiawe* trees in the back of his home, and on the side. So I think most of their intention was to clear where they were gonna live, and then work out toward the *kiawe* trees, 'cause every now and then they would cut the *kiawe* trees down. So each time, they were trying to clear most of it. But there were a lot of *kiawe* trees yet.

MK: And that was all by just physical labor.

RY: Right, right. I remember my dad, he used to use his truck, the [1935] International [pickup] truck. They would tie the rope to uproot the roots. Yeah. So it was all manual labor. But to

dig the well, I remember they used to dig it, and I think like his friends would go and help him, and the land was a lot of coral. Lot of coral I remember. And that's why the road was white. It's coral that they had laid. And there were lot of rocks, and my sister would say, "Oh, I never saw so many rocks!" She said she learned to drive the pickup truck. You know, she learned to drive the pickup truck and because it's on private land, she didn't have a license, but she would drive it. And then she would help Dad move the rocks. But she said—[even] with that many rocks that she moved—she said, "And there's still more rocks!" And she said she can never forget rocks and rocks and rocks.

But they were able to move all the rocks and make these stone walls, you know, just piling it up. You know, like the old *heiaus*? They kept piling the rocks to make the stone walls. That's the way it was, 'cause I remember seeing that. I said, "Oh, looks like a *heiau*." You know, the first time I saw, I said, "Oh, look like those *heiaus* that we used to see." But they made their pile, kept piling the rocks, piling the rocks, down the line, and made the stone walls. That's how much rocks there were. And coral rocks and. . . .

MK: And how about, like you said the roads were, like, white with coral, yeah. Were there, like, utilities available?

RY: Oh, we had electricity. We had electricity. And I found out, some of the neighbors had telephones, but very few. So there might be a neighbor, maybe, one mile away who had a telephone, you know. But not too many had telephones, but we did have electricity.

MK: And, you know, when you first moved from Wailupe to Pu'uloa, what were some of the adjustments that you remember you and your family having to make, in the way, you know, managing day to day? Did you have to make adjustments in your lifestyle?

RY: I remember I kept telling my dad, "I didn't want to move. I didn't want to make new friends. I didn't want to change school." But you had no choice, so one of the adjustments for me was that there were no longer friends to play with or talk with. None of them had any teenage kids. So the only ones that I could talk to was either Mom or to my brothers. And my brothers, being all brothers, oh, they would talk among themselves. They would play among themselves. They couldn't be bothered with me, 'cause I'm a girl, and they're boys, and that was one of the hardest things, that I didn't have nobody to talk to except Mom. There was no other teenager around, girls. Then when I went to school, somehow I was amazed that word got out that there were kids from the city. I don't know why we got labeled, "Oh, you're the kid from the city."

That amazed me. I thought, what's the big deal, you know, But we got labeled as, "Oh, you're the kids from the city."

And I was amazed that they could spot you. It seemed everybody, whole student body knew about you, that you're the kid from the city, and you had two brothers that, you know, that came from the city. And I thought to myself, gee, am I the only one that came from the city. But I found out most of them came from Waipahu or some other surrounding areas. Like the Bingos, Stella was only baby, and she was less than a year old. And the Kakazus kids were too young. So naturally you stood out like a sore thumb. Everybody knew you were from the city. And, "Oh what's the school like?" And but it was more that you got labeled, "Are you the kid from the city?"

I couldn't get over that for a while. I went home and told my mother. I said, "Mom, the whole school knows about me, and I get labeled that, 'You're the kid from the city.'" You see.

"But why would they do that?" Mom couldn't understand that too.

And I dreaded that for a while. But Mrs. Gay, one of the teachers, I understand that her husband [Frank E. Gay] was one of the managers at the 'Ewa plantation. And Mrs. Gay was real nice. And she assigned me as a chairman of the English committee. And she told me that we would have contests and everything else. But she was real nice, and I even told her, I said, "You know, it seems every kid in the school labels me as the kid from the city."

She said, "For them, in a rural district, in a rural school, it is a big deal that a city kid is in that school."

And she tried to help me adjust to that. And after talking to her, I understood it. And so that sort of eased it, you know, being labeled the kid from the city. And she told me also that anything like that is a big event, a big change in the school, because they're so in a remote area.

And one of the things that impressed me was the statue of Abraham Lincoln. 'Ewa School still have the statue. That really impressed me that in a remote school that they would have a statue of Abraham Lincoln. And most of us kids knew about Abraham Lincoln. Most of them worshipped him like a hero. And here was a school in the country that had a statue of Abraham Lincoln. I could never forget that. And every day I'd go there and look and admire the statue.

But that Mrs. Gay really helped me to adjust to a country school, and she kept me after school and talked to me. And she told me that, like, you were in a basketball team and you competed in tournaments. She said none of the kids at that school had those things. She told me that when you're in a country school, it's different. That's why the kids all want to ask you so many questions. It seemed as though I used to get bombarded with questions. And I got real self-conscious, because most of them asking me all those things and paying attention to me was boys. And you know that age, when you're fourteen, you're very sensitive to that, you know. And I told Mrs. Gay and she said, "No, it's just that boys will be boys. They want to get your attention."

So then when she told me about the English committee and we would set up essay contest and have different things going on. But the sad part of it was that we never got to actually start it, when I had to leave school, at least 'Ewa School. So I never got to see Mrs. Gay or anybody else after we got evacuated.

MK: And you know, during that time, from, say, September until December, were you able to make friends and . . .

RY: Oh, we made friends, uh huh. I got to be able to communicate with the kids. They wanted to know what kind of things we did in school, so we would exchange ideas. So we were just about adjusting ourselves. My brothers, being younger and being boys, I think, had an easier time to adjust. 'Cause they never did complain, you know. At least they didn't go home and complain to Mom, you know. "Oh Mom, it's so hard." You know, adjust to the school. And

Mom is preoccupied with my brother who's in the hospital, you know. And so that part was real hard for me, that there was nobody around of my age to discuss things, to talk things over, or even discuss school. I could discuss school when I went to school, but after I left school, there was nobody else. You couldn't discuss things or have girl talks after school or during the weekends 'cause where we lived was so remote too. 'Ewa town was at least a town, even though how remote area they were from the city. But they had a group of people, they had a town. And after I left school, I went to a even more remote area home. That was the hard part.

MK: And then, like, how did you get to and from school since it's so remote.

RY: Oh, my dad took us to school and he would be waiting. He would come into town to---I remember he had a PO box number at the post office, 'cause we would always have to go to the post office to pick up mail, and he went to the stores to pick up groceries, and there were times that he would tell us to wait. All right, we would wait, then he would pick up all the supplies and we would go home. So he always took us to school and picked us up.

MK: And I guess in terms of shopping, shopping was done in 'Ewa town then?

RY: As I recall, he used to do a lot of shopping at the 'Ewa plantation store. There used to be an 'Ewa plantation store, 'cause I would remember that raw sugar. It wasn't granulated sugar. Dad always buy that bag of that raw sugar. It's not quite like brown sugar, was raw sugar. And I'd complain, "Dad, I want to do baking but I need the other sugar."

He said, "You can bake as well with that sugar."

I said, "No Dad. You cannot be using that kind of sugar."

And Mom would say, "Oh, I use that sugar to make something. It will come out all right."

So it was adjusting to a lot of things. But I remember mostly that I had missed my friends, kids of my age. And I resented---for a while, I really resented the boys that they would make an extra effort to come and find me to talk to you. I would complain about that to my mother, and she would say, "It's because you're a girl and you're something different," you know, for the boys.

I said, "But they don't help me one bit because the girls get mad at me." Because all the boys would come in groups, you know, trying to talk to you, and the girls would get real upset that you're the center of the attraction. I said, "I don't like that, Mom."

And I used to fuss about that, I remember. 'Cause you wanted to make friends with the girls more. And she said, "Well, give them time and you can make friends with the girls."

But just about the time that I was getting to know them and making friends and we were able to talk stories, you know, the attack came. So that part I had a real hard time adjusting. And I resented a lot of things at that time. At that age it's hard to cope with things, trying to make new friends. Telling the boys, "I don't wanna talk to you folks," you know. And the more you tell them, "No, I don't wanna talk to you folks," you know, the more they want to talk to you.

MK: And so, by that time, you know, like from August to December, how much work had your father done to your lots? Were they more worked on by the time December came?

RY: I would say he did quite a bit. I was amazed. 'Cause from what I heard, when he bought those lots, it was just filled with *kiawe* trees. So you gonna have to work from the edge, inwards. And he had done quite a bit of work. Even his piggery, with all of the *kiawe* wood they could utilize, all the pens were made. I was amazed that he had done so much work. Of course he had friends, and my grandmother's friends who stayed there at the house. And he would bring them home for the weekends, to the families. And they helped a lot, but I was amazed at how much work was done manually, without no machinery, without no heavy equipment like you do now. Now, if you're talking about acres, you—that machinery is gonna do it within half a day, you know. But not in those days. It took them months to do it.

MK: And then, like, when your friends came over to help, was it more like a reciprocal relationship so that if they needed help, he would go help them with whatever they needed help, or was it payment . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . or how did it work?

RY: I understand that the two elderly men, they had agreed, my dad would pay them, and he furnished the room and board, while they were staying before we moved. So that's why my sister and my grandma would go, to do the cooking to feed them. And they were given rooms, so it was—and Dad gave them money because I understand they did not have a steady job. They took whatever job they could get. So he paid them some money. And they would stay on the farm to work on it, but you couldn't expect too much, because they were Grandma's age, in their seventies. But yet, Japanese people, even at that age, they did hard manual labor. They were hard workers. I used to see them move the lumber, you know. I used to think to myself, oh, they're so old, how can they do that? But they just did the work and they took it in stride, whatever they had to do. But then, my father's younger friends—like, there was a guy, real husky guy, Harry Okamura, he would go and help my dad. And like, Yoshi [Kawano] would go sometimes, the Kawano man, they would go whenever they had time to help, but they would come home because they had some other jobs. They would go on their days off to help. And I remember Harry used to be such a husky guy. Oh, you know, he could lift things just like that. And those people just went to help my dad, he didn't have to pay them. As friends, they went to help. So they did a lot of work. That wasn't the only one. Like the Suyemotos, the boys were young, the two bachelors were young. They did a lot of their own work. It's amazing how much they could do.

MK: And from the time your dad moved the whole family to Pu'uloa, did he ever go back to Hind-Clarke for . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . employment? So whatever income he could derive would have to come . . .

RY: From the farm itself.

MK: . . . from the farm.

RY: He had quit at Hind-Clarke Dairy. We had given up the home there and that got to be his full-time job.

MK: And so in terms of income that came in to the family, it would be your dad's work.

RY: Mm hm.

MK: And how about your sisters? Were they then contributing to the family income?

RY: They were helping my dad. They were helping my dad. Moneywise, whatever they earned, they kept some for their own use, and they had helped Dad. So I imagine that helped pay for whatever supplies we needed, whatever school supplies we needed.

MK: And then, at that time, I think you mentioned that your youngest brother, Kent, had been born and was in the hospital?

RY: He was in the hospital. And I remember sometime in October, he was able to come home. He was able to come home to live with us. But then, one day, my mother was feeding Kent. I remember I was in the kitchen and she screamed. And I ran to her, I said, "What happened?"

And she said, "Baby died!" You know.

Kent had gone limp. And when I got to her, his head was hanging. I said---oh, she said, "I think baby died."

And I couldn't believe it. I told Mom, "Oh, carry baby up," you know, "put baby up. Pat his back, hit his back." And I yelled for my brothers and I said, "Go and get Dad!"

But to go get Dad is a long way off. He would be like they would have to go and run maybe to the next block and hunt for him. He might be working way in the woods. They had to run. I said, "Hurry!" And I remember telling my mom, "Mama, carry baby upwards," you know, "put the baby up and pat the back, hit the back, Mom." You know. And she was rubbing and I remember rubbing him and everything. And we were frantic. We were sure baby had died. And my father came running, and they just jumped in the truck and went off.

And hours later when they came home, I thought Kent had died. My mom was, oh, she was so drawn and so tight, and she just got off the truck and my dad brought her in. And I thought they were gonna tell me that baby died. But, no, my father said no, they took him to the 'Ewa [Plantation] Hospital and they had to leave the baby there. That was sometime in---it was sometime in the middle of November, I remember, or late November, sometime in November anyway. But she said, "No, our baby didn't die, but baby has to stay in the hospital." Yeah.

And that didn't help Mom at all. You know, she---to go through that again, it was a trauma for her. 'Cause I noticed she had lost weight, she hardly talked. But then, we had the other kids too, so she would tend to them and they would make her forget, especially Tom. You know, he's so rascal and he would chatter all the time, and he would make Mom forget. But you could see that her mind was always on Kent, you know, the baby.

MK: So the baby was at 'Ewa Hospital or . . .

RY: 'Ewa Plantation Hospital.

MK: And did she go to visit Kent often . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Okay.

RY: No, it seemed as though Dad took her to visit Kent, 'cause I remember many days they would come and get us at school, Mom was in the truck with him. And she would say they went to see baby. So it seemed every time that he was gonna come and pick us up, whenever he could, he would take Mom to see Kent. And because I remember always asking, "Is baby still alive?"

And she would say, "Oh, Kent is still alive."

'Cause I always had the fear that every time, you know, that they're gonna tell me that Kent died.

MK: Oh.

RY: You know, I don't know why it was that that was constantly on my mind that, oh, they're gonna tell me that Kent died. And I don't know why it was, but in school too, I tried to concentrate on my studies, yet Kent was always on my mind. That one day they gonna pick me up at school and tell me that Kent died. And I somehow always related Kent with Mom that, oh, if Kent dies, Mom is gonna wish that she died. So I don't know why it was, I always had the fear that if Kent dies, Mom is gonna die. And I would keep telling Mom, "Mom, don't die now! Don't die on us." I remember telling her that all the time, that I didn't want Mom to die, you know. So I always had that fear that if Kent dies, Mom's going to die. But I don't know why I related that two.

MK: Gee, that's a lot of worry for a teenager, yeah.

RY: And I remember sometimes I would go to school and I think even Mrs. Gay could see that I was preoccupied. And she would say, "Are you preoccupied with something else?"

But I was preoccupied with Kent. How long is he gonna live, you know, whether he's gonna die. And if he dies that somehow it was always related with Mom, that Mom is gonna die. And I would beg Mom, "Mom, don't you die! Mom, you cannot die. Don't you leave me."

I always had that fear. I don't know why.

MK: I guess you probably saw all the concern she had for the baby.

RY: I could see Mom constantly worried. I could see Mom always sitting, thinking about the baby, and she's crying. I guess seeing that related Mom with Kent, if he dies, Mom's gonna

die. Then, I'm thinking, oh, what's gonna happen to us, you know, with my brothers too. And so I always said, "Mom, you have to eat now. Mom, you have to eat." You know.

MK: Oh.

RY: It was always that, "Oh, I have to make sure that Mom ate, you know, so that she don't die. And I have to make sure that Mom gets her rest so that, you know, she stays healthy." But I could see where Mom's mind was on Kent. Yet, she had the others to care for, and she had to cook and clean for. And I would tell Mom, "Don't worry about the washing, I'll come and wash."

But then she would have the washing done by the time I get home. And I say, "Okay Mom, you go and rest, I'll do the cooking." You know. It was always the constant fear that if I don't take care of Mom, she's gonna die. I don't know why it was. Because maybe it was because she went through so much with Kent from the time that he was born, I always felt maybe that if Kent dies, she didn't want to live, you know, not knowing that she had other kids that she would have a will to live. But in my mind, you know, I'm thinking like a child would think.

MK: Yeah.

RY: You know, I'm not thinking beyond that, that Mom will have a will to live because there are other kids, but in my mind, I'm thinking as a child, that, oh, you know, if Kent dies, Mom is gonna sure to die.

MK: That's a lot of worry for a teenager.

RY: That was---I don't know why I was so concerned about Mom. "Mom, you cannot die." I used to constantly remind her, "Mom, don't you die now. You cannot die, you can't leave us." You know, "Mom, I don't want you to die." And maybe that had something to do that Mom had a will that she cannot die, you know.

MK: So I guess, you know, when December 7 came, you know, I was wondering---well, I'm gonna back you up a little bit. Before December 7 came, were you aware of any fears of war coming or did your mom, dad, or *obāchan* talk about Japan and the United States, or anything like that? Any hint of any worries?

RY: No. There was no worry or no hint. *Babachan* resigned herself, I guess, you know, that she's just gonna stay on the farm and it seemed as though she was real happy. *Babachan* was real happy that she had her garden to tend to every day. And---but Dad and Mom never did say anything that there might be trouble between Japan and United States. At school, when we were studying current events, we always had to bring up the subject how the world was going on and United States. But there was no hint that anybody knew that there would be war.

My father used to listen to the radio a lot. He had this radio, old radio, with a wooden cabinet. He would always listen to the radio in the evening. But we were so busy doing homework and everything. But Dad never gave us indication that it did not look good at all. But I knew he kept track, 'cause he would always listen to the news. But somehow he did not discuss there might be war or anything, the relationship was strained, or he didn't say anything. But somehow he must have known, because when December 7 came, he and the

boys had gone to the water station to pick up drinking water. He had gone with two boys, Richard and Irwin. And by the time they were there, they got caught in the attack. See, they were caught in the attack and my brothers, so excited, they could see the planes come down. And I remember my brother saying, "We saw the plane with the real red big ball."

But my father knew already. And to get the water, he used to travel on the cane hauling road. That's in the middle of the cane roads, you know, with the cane growing tall and everything. When he saw the planes, and my brothers all so excited, "Oh, look at that plane," you know. And the planes came swooping down real low, that my brothers said, "Oh, look at the red ball. Dad, look at the red ball on the wings." He said, "There's a man in the plane."

See, and the kids don't know any better. But my father, when he saw that and—he saw that and the kids said the red ball, he knew. He told us that rather than get caught in the cane fields, because the Japan pilots now don't know whether you Japanese [American] or you just an alien on the island O'ahu. He said rather than get shot in the cane field and where nobody may not find them, he figured, well, he better get on the main road. His chances would be better on the main road, the big coral road, that if he should get caught, get shot or get bombed, at least somebody would find them and inform the family. In the cane road, it may be weeks by the time somebody find him. So he said he made it to the main road and came home on that road, rather staying on the cane road that was closer. And so he came home on the main road, but he didn't tell the boys. But as soon as he came home, we were crying because all that bombing going on, you know. And he went straight to the radio, and he told us that we're being attacked by the Japanese.

But the kids don't know anything, who the enemy is or what. And they were so excited, telling us, "The plane came way down, and we could see the man in the plane! And there's a red, big ball."

As soon as I heard that, I said, "Dad, did Japan attack us?"

He said, "Yes."

And *Babachan*, we had to tell her, and my grandma said, "*Nihonjin wa anna koto sen yo*" ("Japanese wouldn't do that sort of thing").

But my dad is telling her, "It is the Japanese that attacked us."

Told Grandma, "No. *Nihon wa anna koto sen*" ("No. Japan wouldn't do that sort of thing").

And we had a hard time convince her. It took us a long time to convince her, you know.

MK: And I think you were telling me that your *obāchan* was really scared because something about her being Japanese and . . .

RY: She was real frightened. When she finally realized that it's Japan, and she wanted to know if they landed and whether (we) were gonna get occupied. And she would constantly ask for the update. I said, "No, *Bāchan*, they just bombed Pearl Harbor."

And she knew where Pearl Harbor was. I said they bombed that. And she wanted to know if they were gonna invade Hawai'i, because she told me that if the Japanese ever invaded us and

occupied us, she said she knows she will be killed as a traitor. I said, "No, *Bāchan*. Their government knew you were coming to Hawai'i."

And she kept telling me, "*Heitai-san wa anna koto shiranai*" ("Soldiers don't know that sort of thing"). *Heitai-san* care less what was legal and what was not legal. And she's telling me, because she's a---and I couldn't understand that part. She would say she's a *Nihonjin*, but she used the word, *Nipponjin*. And later on, I found out, *Nipponjin* means a citizen of Japan. A *Nihonjin* is the race. She said, "No. *Nipponjin wa Nipponjin, heitai-san wa shiranai*" ("No. A citizen of Japan is a citizen of Japan, a soldier doesn't know"). And she (would) get shot as a traitor.

I kept telling her, "Why would they shoot you for a traitor? We're all Japanese."

But she's telling me, "No, *washi wa Nipponjin da dakara*" ("No, because I am a citizen of Japan"), she would be classed a traitor. That she left Japan to come to an American territory. She would be classed a traitor. And that was one of her fears that if we got invaded, she would be shot as a traitor. Because she had lived in an American territory, (and) she left her own native land.

I kept telling *Babachan*, "If they gonna shoot you, they gonna shoot all of us."

"No," she tells. "No, you are *America-jin*, *Otōsan to onnaji*, *America-jin*, *chigau yo*" ("No, you are an American, same as Father, American, it's different for me").

But you know, when you're fourteen, you can't relate those things.

MK: Yeah, yeah.

RY: In time of war, and going through the trauma of, you know, United States getting bombed. But she kept telling me, "No, you, *Otōsan to onnaji*, *Okāsan to America-jin*, *chigau yo*" ("No, you, same as Father, and Mother, Americans, it's different for me").

I used to tell, "*Babachan*, if the Japan soldiers come, what's the difference? You('re) Japanese, I'm Japanese."

But she's telling me, "No, *chigau yo*, *Nipponjin to America-jin wa chigau*" ("No, we're different, a citizen of Japan and a citizen of America are different"). But she would be classed a traitor.

I said, "No, *Babachan*."

MK: She was so scared.

RY: Yeah. But then, it took me a long time to realize what she was trying to tell me, that she would be classed a traitor to her country, but not us. We're Americans, you know.

MK: And how did your mother and father think at the outbreak of war?

RY: Well, they were more worried about the two girls not being able to come home, because it was that whenever they could come home, they have a home to come home to weekends. My

dad would have to check, go to town to check if they coming home and go and pick them up. But on that day, (Mother's) fear was for the girls and the baby in the hospital. She wanted to get news, where different parts were bombed, because we could hear on the news where sections of Downtown was bombed. And she worried that the girls got probably bombed on the bus or what. And my dad couldn't check just like that (until) the next day, when they went to---at the insistence of Mom (to) get the baby out of the hospital. She said she rather have the baby with us. So at that time, I think he called the Hinds to see if Helen was okay. She said, "Yeah, I never got a chance to catch the bus to go home."

Dad got hold of my other sister. They [RY's sisters] thought we had died already because they knew we were close to Pearl Harbor. He said, "No, we're all right. Just don't try to come home. It's more dangerous here, so just stay put, I'll check with you folks." So they couldn't come home anymore.

But they wanted to come home, and he insisted that, "No, don't come home because it's more dangerous to come home."

But Kent, they went to get Kent.

MK: And how was Kent at that time? Was he okay?

RY: He was still small and weak. You could see that he was so weak. But my mother was just happy to get him home. And of course, I could hear my parents talking. And they must have been making some plans. And I think they were worried that if (we) should get invaded, what's gonna happen to us. And I could hear them whisper things. At that time, it didn't dawn on me that they would be talking about me more because I'm a teenager already, I'm a girl. And if I approached them, they would stop talking. It was years later that I thought, oh, when I read that lot of the families worried about their teenage daughters, then it dawned on me that they must have been talking about me. The brothers would be all right, you know, they were worried about me. But even if my dad was to say that he's gonna take me somewhere to stay with my sister, I knew that my mother needed me more.

After December 7, she made it that Dad and (she) would stay with the baby and they sort of moved *Babachan*. There was a large *pūne'e* in the living room, I remember. And she said, "Keep the boys all there and you and *Babachan* stay on the floor." And in case something come up, we would be able to assemble faster than trying to scramble from room to room, trying to locate somebody. So that's what we did. We slept all together, even if we have to sleep on the floor, and (kept) the boys on the bed.

MK: How long did that continue, you know, kind of preparing for possible invasion?

RY: Well, my dad feared that if something should happen, we all have to probably leave together. That much, I guess, he prepared himself because my mother had blankets and towels and things ready, in boxes, in case we had to leave. And as far as food was concerned, I noticed she had some canned goods ready, only canned goods, because other things would be perishable. And she had moved the rice into the living room, but I think they didn't want to make it obvious that we would get frightened. But I had noticed that they moved the rice in the living room, and she had some canned goods in the box, and I thought, oh, I wonder if they're getting ready that we may have to fight for our lives. But then, as the news went by, you know, it seemed as though they did not invade Hawai'i, but a lot of things were being set

up by the military. But Dad continued with his farming, and he said, "Just make sure, don't have the kids going off the property." 'Cause the boys used to be boys, and he used to allow them go down to the shorelines of Pearl Harbor. You know, weekends, they would be so adventurous, they would go down (to the shorelines). But I was never ever to leave our property.

And so he would tell me, "Go down as far as the Bingos, go look for the boys, but don't go any further. Just call for them."

But the boys eventually would come home. But I was never to wander any further than the Bingos, that was the neighbor, yeah. But Dad continued taking care (of the farm) and he would say, he would tell *Babachan*, "Just tend to the garden early and get into the house."

So we made sure that we were mostly around the house, because Dad figure he can run to the house faster. And he would tell me, after the attack, the boys weren't allowed to go wandering around. He would say, "Keep the boys in the house, or around the house. Don't let them go wandering."

So that's the hard part, you know, with boys. They tend to---well, I had to make sure they stayed around the house. And I used to really scare them. "The planes are gonna come and bomb us again, you better stay near the house." I figured that way they won't go wandering all over the place, especially Tom. He was so adventurous and so rascal. He was able to talk the two older boys into doing anything he want them to do.

MK: Oh. And then, was there shooting or anything in your area, later on? I mean, during that time?

RY: Yeah, we could hear gunshots. And, we would get so frightened that, I wonder if they started to invade (us), and they shooting at people. But it was that the sentry station around was ordered to shoot anything that moved. That's why it was real dangerous to wander away from your property, because we knew there were sentries and they were gonna shoot first and ask questions later.

MK: Did anybody in that area ever get hurt with the sentries . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . firing, you know, out of nervousness.

RY: Probably some other farmers had some experience, but I didn't hear of anybody getting shot up. But every---almost everybody said they could hear the gunshots at night. And we could hear it, the rifle sound. And, oh, I would get so scared. The boys just slept soundly. But my father would always come to check at the windows and see, take a look around if there was somebody outside our property. But he would always tell us to stay low. And he would tell *Babachan*, "Don't stand up in the middle of the night," you know. So that was some of the precautions we had to take.

MK: And I know that that rascal brother of yours, Tommy, he had a birthday right? When was his birthday and what happened?

RY: His birthday was December 8 and Mom always made some kind of special dinner for each child's birthday. And December 8 was his birthday, but Mom was more concerned about going to pick up Kenny, bringing him. And nobody was in the mood of cooking. We would just hastily eat fast. She would make meals but she would tell them, "Hurry and eat," because we didn't want to get caught in anything.

And Tommy knew that was his birthday and he expected something. And in that commotion of December 7, we forgot to wrap his birthday gift and give him a birthday gift. And he made a big commotion about it. And him being verbal anyway, he went on and on. So Mom would say, "All right, we're gonna pick up Kent and I will make you a birthday dinner with whatever we had." She couldn't make anything special. She was in no mood to do any baking, and so it was just a plain, ordinary dinner. And he recognized that it was a plain dinner so we had to tell him there's a war on, we might get attacked, so we can't. And naturally we forgot to wrap his birthday gifts and. . . .

And he said, "And you folks didn't even give me a birthday gift."

And in such a remote area, like if—we used to live in town. We would tell Dad to take us to the store or we would catch the bus and get each other a gift, even in those days if you spent twenty-five cents, you know, for a box of handkerchief, that was a big amount. And we would just give, exchange gift, twenty-five cents gift, you know, a box of handkerchief, or a sock, or something. And in that remote place, we didn't have anything for him. But Mom remembered she had some books, so she told me to wrap that for him and give it to him. But he was real(ly) hurt. He was real(ly) hurt that nobody remembered his birthday. Because if it was a birthday, usually my parents would get some kind of gift, you know, for them, and there was nothing for him, except for the books. And so I remember my brothers would give up their toys, "Okay, Tom, I'll give you this. You really wanted this, so I'll give you this for (your) birthday."

And would you believe it, he would complain that it wasn't wrapped!

(Laughter)

RY: I said, "Tom, we cannot be wrapping, we cannot be worrying about that. You just have to take it." I tell you. He complained that it wasn't even wrapped.

MK: And then, in terms of school, what happened?

RY: Well, I remember martial law was declared, because we would listen to the radio and my father said, "Oh, the Territory of Hawai'i closed all the schools." Schools were officially closed. So he said, "No way you folks can go to school."

I said, "Okay, fine."

And I don't know if I was more relieved at that or whether—I really had mixed emotions, I guess. You know, school is closed. Here, I just made friends, I lost friends again, I said, "I don't know when I'm gonna get to see them."

And anyway, it was a real, for me, I had real mixed emotions about that. I was going to turn this paper in to Mrs. Gay, and Mrs. Gay was to set up a meeting to discuss the projects and

everything. And I really felt a let down, when they said school closed. All right, so that was that and my brothers said, "Oh, how come we're not gonna go to school?"

I said, "No, school is closed because of the war."

And each time we would hear things. And one of the first things I remember was (about) all aliens. . . . And I said, "Dad, they talking about *Bāchan*."

We said we better listen good because *Babachan*, you know. They cannot travel anywhere, they cannot move anywhere. They have to be informed if they gonna be moved or what. And there were all kind of restriction on the alien I remember. But of course, we didn't tell *Babachan* that. As long as we keep track. She don't need to be told because she's already so fearful that she's gonna get shot anyway. But I'm sure my father must have worried, because we already had stories that all the aliens being rounded up. And they had to be moved, they had to be. . . . And lot of the families didn't know where they went to. And he was so sure they would come and get *Babachan*. He was worried about that too. He didn't let it know, but I know he was worried. He said, "Oh, listen good when they say anything about the aliens." I knew it was about his mother, so he was concerned.

We had to put dark curtains or blocking . . .

MK: Blackout.

RY: Yeah, blackout. So my father would black out the front bedroom where the baby was, because my mother needed to (see). And he would black out the kitchen because he, my mother needed to get his formula. He blacked out the bathroom because with *Babachan*, she needed to get to the bathroom. And we told her (and) we had to tell the boys, "Don't put any lights on after the sun go down."

But you know, it's real hard when they're kids. It's real hard. So we had to make sure, "If you put the light on, somebody's gonna shoot at us." Oh, and I remember I used to scare them so they don't do anything, yeah. But it was impossible to black out the whole house. So we made it that we will black out certain sections that we might have to use.

MK: You know, I know in some places they used to have block wardens. They would come to make sure that the houses were blacked out and everything. Did you folks have someone appointed, was there a warden for that area that came to check that all the rules were being observed?

RY: No. At that time, there wasn't anybody to check, but each of us made sure, and we would look, and the whole area would be pitch, pitch dark. So we knew that nobody turned on any light, or if the light went on, it was blacked out.

MK: And how about inside the house, you know, like right now, the windows are all open, we have ventilation. At that time, with blackout, how comfortable was it to be indoors at night?

RY: Oh, when you—since it was December, it wasn't that bad, you take it that it was cool. So it wasn't that bad yet. I think my dad left the windows opened and he just made sure and tacked all those, the towels or the bedspread, you know. But the windows were left open so that air would come in. But because you had to get some air. But the kitchen area, because of the

mudroom, he had to black out that portion too, the windows. And he told my mother, well, he's gonna black out that one so that she could at least use the flashlight or something to make the baby's formula.

MK: And then, now that you mention the baby's formula, did you folks have enough food and formula and things like that from December 7, the time of the attack, to the time you folks were moved? You folks doing okay?

RY: I remember, I think his formula was in the powdered form at that time, and my mother would always check. But it was the medication she was worried about. But she had brought home enough medication for him, from the hospital. And my father would always check to make sure that—otherwise he would have to go back to the doctor to get the medication. But it seemed at that time he had enough medication and formula. And of course, we didn't know we were gonna get evacuated. We figured that, oh, he can always go and pick it up, you see.

MK: And then, from the time of the bombing of Pearl Harbor to the time you folks were evacuated, day to day, what was life like?

RY: Oh, my father did his farming. Like I said, we always had to make sure that we stayed close to home. And, oh, after few days, you're more or less relaxed, but my mother always made sure that, "Let's cook early, because we don't know what's gonna happen, and feed them."

And the kids would always be---she would tell me to keep the kids in the house, so they would play in the house, or be drawing, or doing coloring. And if they went out, I had to make sure that they stayed around. We always had to keep track of them. And to make sure that they were around and they did not wander away. That was the most important part, and boys, that age, they get restless and, you know, they want to go out. And it was always Tommy, the other two was easy to keep track. I would tell them, "You just stay put now."

But Tommy was so adventurous that you always had to keep an eye on him. And the boys would say, "Oh, you better come and get—Tom wants to go down to Dad."

And Dad wanted to make sure that he didn't have to be burdened of looking for the kid, if we had attack again. So I would say, "No, Tommy, you have to come back."

But he would kick me and I would grab him, trying to drag him in. And Mom would talk to him, and he says, "Okay."

Then Mom would try to tell him, "All right, come on, we're gonna feed baby now, so you come with me."

So at least Mom was able to control (them). I used to tell him, "Oh, you're such a troublemaker."

[Tommy would say], "I'm gonna tell Dad on you. I'm gonna tell Daddy about you."

Oh, he used to—just used to get on my nerves. But then, later, it was getting to be like a recording. And I adjusted myself that I took it in stride. "Oh yeah, you going tell Daddy?"

"Yeah, I going report Daddy."

And the next day, he would forget about it, you know.

MK: And then how about your sisters? From the time of the bombing to your evacuation, were they in contact with your family?

RY: No. They didn't even know that we got evacuated.

MK: No.

RY: There was no time to inform them. I remember the two officers coming in the house. And I remember the soldier with the rifle, with the bayonet. And one had a clipboard, recording things, asking my dad all kind of questions. But one of the questions, most important was, "Are you Japanese? Are you citizens or alien?"

My dad, I heard my dad answer. Then Grandma was in the kitchen, and she happened to come out into the dining area, she was gonna drink her coffee or something. They saw her, "Who is she?"

And my dad said, "That's my mother."

"Is she an alien?"

"Yes, she's an alien."

And my grandma, you know, saw them and she just froze I remember. And I was so worried that they were gonna take her away. I went to stand by Grandma. I said, "Grandma, *Bāchan*, just stay here, *Bāchan*."

She said, "*Dare ka*" ("Who are they")?

I said, "*Heitai-san, America-jin no heitai-san*" ("Soldiers, American soldiers").

And you could see she was real scared too. I just stood with her, holding her. And I could—I wanted to hear what they were saying. And then I thought about my brothers. But my brothers were outside. There was a truckload of soldiers. And boys, being that age, oh, they're so excited, there's an army truck. There's soldiers! And in those days, with boys, soldiers, oh, they idolized them. Oh, they're so excited. They're talking outside and looking at them and I think, I remember, they ran in to tell us that, "There's a army truck! There's lots of soldiers!"

So they're so excited about that, not knowing what their presence meant. But I remember and my grandmother must have been frightened. My dad had the real worried look that they're going—are they gonna take her away? They asked, "Are there any more in the family?"

And so my dad told them about my two sisters. "Where are they?" You know, so he had to tell them about that. "Do you folks have any other relatives in Hawai'i?"

So my dad had to tell them, "No," he has no one else but the mother. And that my mom had no other relatives.

They said, "Okay," then that's when I heard them saying, "okay, you've been ordered to evacuate your home and off the land by sundown." Oh, you know, just hearing that, I think my dad went numb. "You see, do you understand that?"

My dad said, "Yes."

And, oh, I thought to myself, oh, you know, we have to leave? And *Babachan* is saying, you know, "*Nani iuttaka, nani iuttaka*" ("What did they say, what did they say")?

I'm so stunned, just watching my parents that I couldn't tell her what. And all I know is, "Do you understand you're to evacuate this property by sundown? You must be off this property and off the land by sundown?"

MK: Oh. And what time was that when they came?

RY: I remember---it must have been mid-morning, 'cause I remember we had gotten through with breakfast, we were done with breakfast. And my mother was thinking about lunch time. I remember it was mid-morning. So to be out by sundown, that don't give anybody too much time.

MK: Just eight hours then. So, how many men came into your home to inform you or your dad?

RY: I remember, I took it those two were the officers, 'cause they were dressed differently. And one had a clipboard and made lot of entries on a piece of paper. The other one did a lot of talking. The one soldier with the bayonet—with the rifle and the bayonet—stood in the back of them. He didn't say anything. But there was a truckload of soldiers outside. But I remember the three entering the house.

MK: And were they all Caucasian or . . .

RY: Mm hm, mm hm. They were all Caucasian. They were all Caucasian. But, you know, being told that way, I think my parents heard what they did, and yet, they're so stunned, 'cause I even remember, I said, "Oh, did I hear them say that we have to get out by sundown?"

And all I remember was they was telling my father, "Do you understand?"

I remember (him) saying, "Yes."

And they repeated that, "You must be off your property by sundown."

And I was hoping my father would not fight them or anything, 'cause the guy with the rifle and the bayonet, and the truck full of soldiers. And he just told them, yes, he understands. And he said, "All right, fine." And they repeated, "By sundown." And they left.

And I remember asking them, "Dad," you know, "they said that we have to be out by sundown."

And, for him, you know, it's such a shock. He just stood there for a while, and my mother is in tears. And she is saying, "Where are we gonna go by sundown?"

But we were told---I remember them saying that the Japanese[-language] school, you can sleep only at that Japanese school. Dad says, "Honouliuli Japanese School. The accommodation would be made only to sleep there." But my father with that sick baby---and he just started to think, where shall we go? And he told my mother, "No, you folks cannot stay at the Japanese school. There's no accommodation." And . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-44-4-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ruth Yamaguchi (RY)

July 28, 1992

Pearl City, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Yamaguchi on July 28, 1992, at her home in Pearl City, O'ahu. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay. The last time I was here, we were talking about the day of evacuation, and I think, first of all, I know you don't know the exact date of that evacuation, but . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . about when was it, you think?

RY: I had thought it was about two weeks after December 7, because we were looking forward to our first Christmas there. And now, with the war on, we weren't sure, you know, whether we're gonna be celebrating, but yet we were still looking forward to it, for our first Christmas. And but, before Christmas, the military men came, so we weren't able to celebrate any Christmas in the new home.

MK: So, on the day that the military men came, tell me what you remember about the day, from the time they came to your farm?

RY: Well, I remember two---they were dressed like officers because they were different from the rest of the soldiers that was in---you could see the truck full of soldiers, but they were dressed differently. But one man did come in with the rifle and a bayonet. And the two officers, that I thought it was officers, did all the talking. One had a clipboard, I remember, and was making all kind of entries, you know, writing things. And the other one was talking, asking questions, like I remember the first question was, to my father, "Are you Japanese?"

My father answered, "Yes." And they wanted to know whether we were citizens or aliens. My father said we were citizens.

But then my grandmother who was in the kitchen walked into the dining area, which is adjoining the living room by big, French doors that you could see right through. And when they saw my grandmother, they wanted to know, "Is she an alien?"

And my father said, "She is an alien."

They also asked about other members in the family. So my dad, I remember, told them about my two sisters. And the other question was whether we had other relatives in Hawai'i. So my father said, no, he had no other relatives, just my grandmother. And they had made some kind of entry—that one guy kept writing things on this clipboard. And then, the next thing we knew, we were told, "You're to evacuate your property by sundown." On that day, to leave on that day, and to be out by sundown.

MK: And about what time did these military men come to your home?

RY: I remember, it must have been mid-morning, because we were all done with breakfast. But I know we did not have lunch yet, we didn't even prepare lunch. So I take it was sometime mid-morning, maybe about 10:00, 10:30 or so.

MK: And when your grandmother came into the room and saw your dad talking to the military men, how did she react?

RY: Oh, she did ask me who were they. So I told her, "*Heitai-san*."

And she noticed that they're Americans. She said, "*Oh, America-jin no heitai-san*" ("Oh, American soldiers"). And that was it.

Oh, and she wanted to know, "*Nani Otōsan ni iūteta*" ("What were they saying to Father")?

So, I didn't want to tell her at that time, you know. I just told her, "*Oh, ano Otōsan ni Nihonjin ka to iu oru*" ("Oh, they're asking are you Japanese").

And she said, "Oh." I guess she probably knew, because when she found out Japan attacked us, I didn't tell her too much at that time. I could see my dad really got worried and I got real nervous that, you know, they were gonna take my grandma away. 'Cause when they questioned about my grandma, oh, I was so sure they were gonna take her away. I went next to her, that's when she started to talk to me. I feel if I'm close to her, they won't drag her away. But that was one of the things that I was real worried about, and I'm sure my dad was worried too, that they were gonna take her away.

MK: And then, how about your mother, what was she doing at that time when the men came?

RY: She, I remember, she was standing next to my dad. But she didn't say anything, my dad did all the answering.

MK: And so once, you know, they were told that they'd have to evacuate by sundown, what happened then?

RY: So then my dad told me that we're gonna have to get out, you know, and blackout was in effect already. So, but then, his worry was where shall we go? And I think at that time he was told that you can go to the Japanese, Honouliuli Japanese[-language] School. But then, he told my mother that there may not be kitchen facilities to make formula and everything. And that was a big discussion going on with my mom. And---but in the meantime, he told me to start packing some clothes for my brothers and get some clothes ready, get some blankets. And I do know they were discussing, where shall we go? And by then, my mother was so upset, she's crying and she's in tears, "How will the girls know where we're going to be?"

And she was worried that they might try to come home again, and find they can't get in. The house---we won't be home.

And so my dad said, "No, we'll take care of that later."

And---but in the meantime, they didn't tell me where we were gonna go. So I was trying to get my grandma to get her things packed. And she's saying, "No, *America-jin de den demo e. Dete doko iku? Kore wa uchi no ie da. Den demo e*" ("No, as Americans, you needn't get out. You get out, where will you go? This is our home. You needn't get out"). But then she realized, she said, oh, she asked me if it's because we have to leave because she's a *Nipponjin*.

I said, "*Babachan, are de wa nai. Minna ga Nihonjin dakara*" ("Grandma, that's not it. It's because everyone's [ethnic] Japanese"). I said it had nothing to do with her.

But she said, "No, *watashi ga Nipponjin*, that's why everybody has to get out" ("No, I am a citizen of Japan, that's why everybody has to get out").

I said, "No, *Babachan, minna ga Nihonjin kara derannaran*" ("No, Grandma, it's necessary that we move because everybody's [ethnic] Japanese").

But she felt so bad. But she's saying, "No, you *ra wa America-jin de den demo e*" ("No, you folks as Americans, needn't get out"), you know. She said, "*Washi dake ga deru*" ("I alone will get out").

I'm trying to tell her, "No, *Babachan*, that's not it. Everybody must get out." That was a hard thing to convince her.

And so I got things ready. My mom packed some of her things, and I said, "Get the baby's things, I'll get my brothers' things." And my dad got his things. Oh, I know, my dad said just pack some of his things for him, that he doesn't know when he'll be able to come back so he has to go and feed the stock, you know, his livestock. So he told the boys, come and help him, so they all went with him to help feed the livestock. And then he got back and he said to start, we would start loading the car. But *Babachan* would not pack. We're ready to go in the car, and *Babachan* came out with only the *butsudan*. She just came out carrying the *butsudan*. She didn't say one word. I said, "*Babachan*," I asked her where's her clothes and things.

And, "No, *iran yo*" ("No, I don't need them").

So my father said, "Go pack some of her things."

And she just held on to the *butsudan*. As I was---it dawned on me that, I know that was the *butsudan* I used to see when we lived in Wailupe. And so, I asked my dad---it was, I think, on [this past] Sunday, I said, "Dad, I remember *Babachan* walking out with the *butsudan*." I said, "I remember seeing the *butsudan* at Wailupe. Now, is that the same *butsudan* that you still have?"

He said, "Yes."

I told my dad, "Oh, that *butsudan* is real old then."

He said, "Yeah, that's the same *butsudan*."

I said, "Did she bring that home from Japan?"

He said, "No, it was made here by a cabinetmaker."

I said, "Oh." But I just wanted to make sure whether the *butsudan* that is in his room is the same one as I remember seeing that one.

He said, "Right, it's the same one."

MK: Were there, you know, other things beside the *butsudan* and clothes, and formula, and blankets that were taken out of the house at that time?

RY: Blankets and towels. But you see, we were under the impression that we would come back. So we didn't leave with too much things.

MK: Did the military men tell your dad how long you would have to evacuate your home?

RY: No, no. They questioned [RY's father] about the farm, and he mentioned that he did have livestock. And he [soldier] said that, "You will have to obtain a pass and show it to the sentry at the gate anytime you want to come in. You cannot come in before sunrise, and you have to be out by sundown."

But you see, under those terms, I'm sure my dad thought that we were going to be coming back. But, of course, he made the decision not to take us to the Japanese school, because he wasn't sure about the facilities, and with the sick baby. And so he said, "No, I'm going to take you folks to Kawano [Toshio and Yoshio Kawano residence in Wailupe]."

In those days, there were only one highway, that's Kam[ehameha] Highway. One lane going that way, one lane going to Honolulu. And I remember him saying that, there's so many military cars, even if they wanted to go to 'Ewa, there were so many military trucks and everything. I said, "Are we going to make it in time?" Because I worried that what if we get caught in the blackout?

So he said, "That's why we have to leave now," you know. "We have to rush and leave early."

And yet, somehow, I felt (even if) we were going, it was going to be couple of days and we were going to come back. So that was about all we packed, mostly clothes, blankets, towels and things. My dad told my mom, "Take all of our birth certificates and everything, all the papers that we might need."

So those legal things, she did pack up. That's why we have our birth certificate and things, the original ones. And he said, "Anything important in the paper, take it."

But I was so sure that we were gonna go back. And that's why, I think, we didn't think anything about leaving a lot of the things in the house.

MK: So what kinds of things did you folks leave?

RY: All our furnitures, appliances, books, because there were so many of us kids, we had a lot of books. And the kids' toys. I remember I had a box full of childhood things, because I would *monku* all the time, my parents made sure that if one got a necklace for Christmas, three of us got it, in different colors, so we won't bicker which one is ours. And so, if there were---one year, I remember, we were given porcelain dolls. At that time, it was porcelain dolls with rag body, but arms and legs and face made out of porcelain with old-fashioned clothes. We had that, and there were lot of childhood things, you know, that girls collect. And I remember, I treasured that box so much, I didn't want to leave it outside. I took it inside the house, in my room. And I would look through it, and I would not allow anybody to touch it. But I thought, oh, I better not take that, because it's important that we take only what we need. And I said, "Oh, when we come back, the box will still be there."

But in my greed for all those things, we lost it all. 'Cause there were lot of things piled in boxes outside the house. And my mom and I would go through the boxes as we needed it. Oh, we need to find something, then, we would look through, "Okay, shall we take this box in?" Each time we would do that and unpack. So there were a lot of boxes on the outside, yet there were things on the inside that---I remember the boys had a Lionel train set. That was in the inside so they could play. So there were a lot of things of our childhood things, yeah.

MK: But then your mother lost a number of things in the house, yeah.

RY: Yeah. Besides all the things that was listed on the document, well, there were more things taken from our old home, like her *tansu*. She had a nice *tansu*, and, I guess, that was the only connection with her parents, you know, like, her stepmother made sure she had a *tansu*. So she treasured that *tansu*, but she lost the *tansu* too, with all the things.

MK: And so you---the only things you had were the things that you took out of house on that evacuation day and the unpacked boxes that you didn't bring into the house. So when was it that you got to get all those boxes that were on the outside? Were you able to get those boxed items later?

RY: Now, on the outside, there were a lot of dishes of my grandmother's, things that she brought from Japan. And, for me, I guess, it wasn't that important, to take those things inside. You know, that's a real child's mind, those things are not important. The other things were more important to take in the inside, so I tell Mom, "Oh, we'll take this later."

So, *Babachan's* things from Japan were all in those boxes, and lot of plates and there were lot of pots and pans that we didn't need to take all of 'em in the house. There were dishes and some of *Babachan's* kimono and things, *obi* and things. See, she might have treasured that, but for me, it wasn't important, you know. And I would tell *Babachan*, "I'll get to that later," you know. And, like my mother's kimonos and things. But those were on the outside, and in a way, I guess it balances out. We lost all the childhood things, and yet, we had things that belonged to my grandmother, that would be now, you know, family heirlooms. My mother's kimono, with the *mon*. *Babachan's* kimono with the *mon*. And we found pieces of *obi*.

MK: So those things that were boxed outside, you were able to retrieve after you folks moved to the Kawanos'?

RY: Okay. Now, we had gone to the Kawanos' [home] and my dad was concerned about the

livestock, the farm. And so he said he must get back with the group that's, with the rest of the farmers at the school. But he just couldn't make it in time, it was too late. So my mother told him, "No, don't start now," he's gonna get caught in the blackout.

So he started back, early the next morning. And he was able to get the pass to get back into his farm. But he would leave before sundown again. But within a week, I think it must have been about a week later, he came with a car full of things, with all those boxes [that were outside the house]. But then, also he came with the bad news, that---and he told my mom that the house is being occupied by the soldiers.

My mother couldn't understand, "What do you mean the house is occupied by the soldiers?"

He said, "The soldiers are living inside of the house."

And she said, "Well, what about our things?"

And I know he really hesitated to tell (her), he says, "The soldiers said anything inside of the house cannot be removed." He cannot remove anything that's inside of the house. So he said he cannot get anything inside of the house. And that's why he said all the boxes outside, he (was able to get and) brought a carload full. But then that news was already devastating to Mom. I thought she was going to collapse, she just went down to the floor and that was that, (her) tears (were) coming down and she just couldn't say anything.

After that, Mom really, really changed. Mom wouldn't talk, Mom wouldn't eat. That's the hard part, you know, I can just see her when she received that news. But my father also had a hard time telling her the news. I thought to myself how difficult it must have been for him to break that news. And when he saw how my mom took the news---'cause I was listening in and I just couldn't believe what he's telling us. I said, "How can it be? You know, they wouldn't do that." I thought to myself, no, the Americans don't do such a thing. But when my father---each time he came, he just brought only the outside things. I figure, well, it must be true. But then I told my mother, "No Mom, I think it must be only for a while." I said, "When they move out, we can go back and we'll get our things."

But it was already too late. Mom, no matter what you say, she wasn't listening, or she didn't care. And I knew Mom was sick already. 'Cause she just wouldn't eat, she wouldn't talk. When February came, I had gone to school, so I didn't know what went on during that time, and Miyoko [Kawano], I think, being the compassionate person she is, she kept a lot of things away from us children. Fifty years later, she tells me that, "Oh, your mom suffered a nervous breakdown."

I knew Mom was sick, when no matter what, I would talk to Mom, she looks at you, but she's looking past you. And she would carry the baby but she just carry the baby and just rocks and rocks the baby. And Miyoko would, you know, try and relieve her and Miyoko would try and get her to eat. I would try and get Mom to eat, but she just wouldn't eat. Miyoko is the one who got her to eat. But then, Miyoko(-san)'s son tells me that several times Mom just left the baby---which was unusual, that she would never, ever do that in her right mind of state. But I didn't know that she had a nervous breakdown, she was suffering that. And Miyoko tells me that she just left the baby and walked out of the house. She said when she went looking for my mom, she cannot find Mom. And only to find out that she see Mom walking down the road. And there's a long, long private road to their home because

(from) the junky road you have to go down quite a bit in the driveway to get to their home. She had gone out of that area from the property, onto the road, the junky road, and she's walking away. And Miyoko tells me she had to run after her, and, "Where are you going, Susoe-san? Where are you going?"

She says, "I'm gonna go visit friends."

And I guess Miyoko knew that she doesn't know what she's doing. And she would talk her into coming home and bring her back. But that must have been taking place while I'm at school. But I do know something was wrong with Mom. She wouldn't talk, she wouldn't eat or anything. And somehow, you know, even when I went to school, oh, it kept bothering me. I couldn't concentrate in school. My mom was always (in my mind), "I wonder if Mom's eating. I wonder if Mom's all right." And somehow, no matter how much I liked school, I just couldn't concentrate. I couldn't concentrate what the teacher is saying, what is going on in the class. And I know I was doing real bad.

The only time I found relief, would you believe it, [was during air raid drills]. All the schools [had] these trenches dug in the school grounds. And there would be drills. When a certain alarm went on, you're to just get out of the classroom and not run, but walk fast and get to the trenches and jump in there. Would you believe it, I found relief in doing that? You know, just getting out of the classroom, going across the fields, and just jumping into the trenches. And the trenches are all dirt. And you're gonna come out sometimes dirty and everything, 'cause everybody's gonna jump in, you're gonna have to scramble in. They tell you to crouch down, crouch down. And all the dirt falling down on you. And when time to get out, you know, you're gonna have to scramble out of it, so you('re) covered with (dirt). But somehow, I used to find relief in those drills. And I don't know why, maybe it was to just release my frustration or what. 'Cause toward the end of the school day, I would think, oh, I wonder how Mom is gonna be (all right) today. It was always on my mind—I wonder if Mom will talk today.

MK: She literally did not talk for a while?

RY: Mm hm. Sometimes when the younger kids would go crying to Mom, she would comfort them. And she would ask me to go to give them a drink or something. But she was in a real bad state for a while. But fifty years later, Miyoko tells me, "It's because your mother suffered a breakdown."

So I'm thinking now that Yoshi Kawano, her husband, was real good to my father and (they were) good friends. So it sounded as though they had taken her to a doctor, and that's how they found out. But I told my sister, I gave credit to Miyoko, that she did not burden me with that. Fifty years later she tells me that.

MK: So this Miyoko-san is Miyoko Kawano, yeah?

RY: Miyoko Kawano.

MK: And she's a member of that family that you folks went to live with?

RY: Yeah.

MK: So when your dad was told that he'd have to evacuate the family, took the whole family to the Kawanos' home. Where was their home?

RY: It was in that Hind-Clarke Dairy Homestead, in our old neighborhood. The only thing was they lived further into the valley. And Yoshi Kawano worked for Hind-Clarke Dairy. But I do remember the brother worked somewhere else, for a private company, and Miyoko did say that's right. And they had gotten that housing rent-free because of Yoshi Kawano working for Hind-Clarke Dairy. Mr. Hind was very generous (and) anybody that worked for him got free housing. But the rest of the family worked elsewhere. My dad told me that they paid very small amount. They paid just a real small amount per month to rent the home.

MK: And so Mr. Kawano was a good friend of your dad's from the time they were working together at Hind-Clarke.

RY: I think they knew each other before that, and they had worked for the dairy together. And I do remember they used to go fishing together a lot. They used to go fishing a lot and they used to always stop by, and so they were good friends.

MK: And the Kawanos, how big was this family that you went to live with?

RY: Now, Yuki-*chan* and Toshi-*san*, that's husband and wife, they had one son and they had four girls of their own. Then there was Jichan Kawano, father of the two brothers [Toshio and Yoshio Kawano]. Then Yoshi and Miyoko and their baby, Eddie. Then, my grandma, my mom, me and my four brothers moved in. I remember, if Mom needed formula for the baby, Miyoko always got up, (too). She said because she knows her way around, although they had blacked (out windows) for the blackout. But I do remember every space, even in the kitchen area, was taken. That's why they didn't want us to go around. We slept more with Yoshi Kawano [and his family], they had a large (room) of their own. And we slept in there. I remember one time that I had to get up, you couldn't even walk around in the kitchen without stepping (on) people. And I always thought that, oh, the Kawanos, the other Kawanos, must have all the kids sleeping there. And by sunrise, everything would be cleared so you don't see anybody else.

But Miyoko tells me now, way down in Wailupe there used to be a [U.S.] Coast Guard station. I understand part of it is still there. And I do remember that, but the people around that area, around that station, that was close across from the highway, from the beach, also had to evacuate (at) night. And Miyoko-*san* tells me all the Okadas and some of the other, I think, Sumida or somebody else, all the neighborhood there had no place to go at night, they all came over to the Kawanos' to sleep. And it didn't dawn on me how can all the space be occupied, I was sure that kids were sleeping in the living room area. But every space that you could find was occupied, with bodies sleeping. She tells me it's because all those people came to sleep at their house at night. She said, "You folks never got to see them." Because they would come way after, before the blackout, but we were already in the other portion of the house where Yoshi and Miyoko would be in. Because to make sure that everybody is in, we were all in there already. And she says, she said, "That's why you folks never got to see the other people."

But I do remember bodies and bodies on the floor. And I remember seeing that because I wanted to get a drink of water and I said, "Wow, where am I gonna step? Oh, there's somebody there." And finally, that one time was enough, I gave up. I said before I step

somebody, I'm just gonna not drink any water, and I went back and I never ventured into the kitchen area after that.

But Miyoko tells me it's because the Okadas and the Nakanos and everybody else came to sleep at that house at night. And early the next morning---but they never stayed around. I guess at sunrise, they just left to go to their homes or to their property.

MK: So they never ate there or . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . bathed there.

RY: No, no. No. They probably did everything before they came over and they just had them sleep there and then we never (see) them at breakfast time or anything. But I do remember so many (people). I said, "I didn't know that the Kawanos made the kids sleep in the kitchen."

And they said, "No, no, that wasn't the Kawano kids." It was the other people that came to sleep who could not stay in their properties. She said there must have been about four different families that came to sleep.

And now it makes sense why every---and my mother kept telling my sister [Helen], "No, there is no (room for her)."

And I remember my sister saying, "That's okay Mom, I'll sleep in the kitchen."

So my mother must have known there were people there. She said, "No, you cannot stay. You cannot stay. You have to go home to the Hinds. There's no room."

And that sister cried. And I remember she used to cry and go home. And after that I would see Mom crying. (My sister) doesn't know why. I remember her saying she'll sleep in the kitchen. But my mom said no. It was because even the kitchen, every space was taken. And they had this long table, a long table with benches for us to eat. And they just pushed the benches inside and there were people around, sleeping around that table too, the dining table. And now it does make sense why my sister Helen (could not) stay over, even if she wanted to sleep in there. My mom said, "No, there's no room in the kitchen too."

And I remember one time, I told my mom, "No, I'll just push the boys sideways, and I'll sleep there, and she can sleep with me."

She said, "No, no, no, no." She knows it's overcrowded as it is. So she said, "No, no, no. You have to go home. You have to go home."

But that's why there were so many bodies. I remember them. And I never, ever got up after that, no matter how thirsty I was, because I was so afraid I'm gonna step on somebody. But I thought it was part of the Kawano family, but it wasn't.

MK: And I think you mentioned one time that when your sister asked to stay and your mother had to turn her away, your sister cried and . . .

RY: Yeah, she cried. She cried, and I remember that she says that Mom didn't love her. But that wasn't so, that's why my mom cried, I think, after my sister went home. But I guess my sister, probably she felt rejected, and she didn't want to feel rejected again, so she didn't ask (again). For a long time she didn't ask if she can sleep again. And I remember one time, she says, "Can I sleep with you?"

I said, "I have to go and ask Mom."

She said, "No, never mind." And she would go home.

MK: And your sister, you said she was with the Hinds. What was she doing? She was working for . . .

RY: She was working for the Hinds, and in the beginning I thought that she was gonna go to school, but then she dropped out and she was working for the Hinds full-time. The Hinds had a big, big home, it's still standing on Kalaniana'ole Highway.

MK: You know, with the Hinds, Hind-Clarke Dairy, having homes for their workers and everything, did your father ever consider asking the Hinds for some assistance in finding an empty home or a place for the family, since he had worked for them in the past?

RY: I'm sure he would have asked, but there was no homes open. There was just so many houses and I do know all of 'em was occupied. I'm sure Mr. Hind would have helped, 'cause he knew that we were all together with the Kawanos, and he was very good to my sister Helen, so I'm sure they would have. But during the war, housing got to be very scarce, with all the military people. And it wasn't (only) the military people occupying the homes, but it was mostly the defense workers. And with the martial law, the defense workers had high priority, I remember that.

MK: And, you know, the Kawanos' home that you moved to, how big was it?

RY: I remember the other Kawanos had two bedrooms and there was a large living room, and there was a dining area, you know, with that long table and the long bench, and then there was a kitchen area, small kitchen area. And then there was a walkway, I remember. It's a covered walkway, it's like a hall. But then, in a little cubicle, there was a toilet. And then, Yoshi and Miyoko had this---gee, in those days, a large room wasn't that large, you know. Maybe from that post to about here [approximately 144 square feet or smaller], you know. That was their quarters and both of them shared the dining and kitchen, cooking and everything else, they shared that. But that was their room and Miyoko and Yoshi had put us into that room. So it was crowded.

MK: So how did you folks manage in terms of eating, using the bathroom, washing up? How did you folks manage?

RY: (Chuckles) With that many people and one toilet, naturally I used to tell my brothers that if it's only to go *shishi*, there was wooded areas in the back, so I taught them to go there. And if they had to use the bathroom, that they cannot be dilly-dallying. And the brushing of their teeth too. I remember there was a sink somewhere outside of the, by the toilet entrance. But everybody cannot be using that, so I would tell them, "You have to go in the yard and open the hose and brush your teeth and rinse your mouth out."

And to take a bath, it's just a *furo*. And you know that everybody cannot be having a hot bath before blackout and everything. So what I did was, early in the afternoon, while the sun was still out, bathed the boys outside in the yard, with a garden hose. And they thought that I was the meanest sister that lived. And I remember Tom, he didn't like that, so he would run off. And it was a job to catch him, he's real fast and he would run in the backwoods. And so I used to tell my other two brothers, when it's almost bath time, you folks know, just hang on to him. And that's the way---and he was always, "I'm gonna tell Daddy on you. You so mean, I'm gonna tell Daddy what you did to me."

He used to always come out with that. And when you're young and you have the responsibilities of your brothers and everything, you're worried about your mom and the baby, it gets to a point where, you know, you get so angry. And one day, I think, I just lost my temper, I told him, "That's right, Tommy, when Daddy comes, you go and tell him. You go and tell Daddy how mean I was, what I did."

'Cause he kept telling me every day, "I'm gonna tell Daddy, you made me brush my teeth outside. I'm gonna tell Daddy that you, the kind of bath you give me, you know. Cold bath outside."

So I told him one day, I said, "You do that. When Daddy comes, you tell him what I did. You tell him how mean I am. Now don't you forget, you do that." And would you believe it, he stopped it.

(Laughter)

RY: He stopped coming up with that. And I used to feel sorry for them, so I had to tell them, you know. I said, "You folks have to really help because Mom is sick and with this many people, it's hard."

But then, every now and then, they would break down and cry. And they said, "Why, why do we have to always wait for the second shift to eat? Why do we have to always take a cold bath? Why isn't Daddy here?"

Sometimes they notice that Mom wouldn't pay attention and . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Okay.

RY: For them, they thought that Mom loved only the baby because she was constantly carrying him. But it was because Kent's body was real cold all the time. He didn't have the resistance and his body temperature was always cold. And I noticed that, so Miyoko would say, "It's better to carry him all the time to give warmth." That was the reason why he was always being carried. But when you're young and small, you can't understand that.

And I used to talk to my brothers, "No, Mom loves you and I'm not trying to be mean, but

we all have to try our best because there's too many people." But it's hard to get that across to kids.

MK: And then, like, was there sufficient food and things like that . . .

RY: No, that's the . . .

MK: . . . for you?

RY: That was another thing, with the war on, there's food rationing. There were lot of things they can't get hold of. My dad tried his best, whatever he could buy at the 'Ewa Plantation, or whatever he could get, he would bring it over. But that was a problem because, with the food shortage and that many people to feed. So Mom would always say, she would always say if the boys had enough to eat. And I noticed she would always give up her food. But then, in turn, I noticed that Miyoko always gave up a portion of her food to feed Mom. That's how much she took good care of Mom. Mom worries about the boys so she would give part of her food to the boys. And then Miyoko sees that and she would give part of her food to Mom. And that was one part I always noticed, (tell) the boys, I said, "I will give you portion of my food, but don't ever take Mom's food."

"No, but Mom loves me. Mom gave me her food." It was always Tommy that would come up with that.

And I said, "I know but Mom is sick and Mom needs the food."

"No, Mom's not sick. I talked to Mom."

Of course she's not gonna tell that she's sick. You know, she would always try to comfort them. But no matter what, the boys just could not understand. And if they understood for that one day, they would forget the next day. And I would tell, "Remember what I told you yesterday?"

"Oh, I forgot."

And you know, kids being kids, they will remember some things but they would easily forget the other things. So it was hard. My dad, being a farmer, the farmers were given priority. They had a lot of gas [online] coupons. And so Dad would always make sure that the Kawanos had enough gas, and he would say to use the coupons because he knows that if in case of an emergency, where they have to get the baby to the doctor, that they would need the gas. And that was another problem, the gas rationing. But my dad said he had enough. They were issued enough gas because they were farmers. But so he always made sure whoever needed gas, he shared his gas coupons. Even within those evacuated farmers. If one family needed gas, I think they all shared their gas coupons, whoever needed it. So that's another reason my dad said that, to make sure that he has enough gas to come and visit, he would not be coming too often, because he would be using a lot of his gas coupons just to come to visit us, and going back took a lot of gas too. So he told me that try and do our best because he won't be using these gas coupons that way, and he wanted to make sure that there was gas coupons for somebody who needed it.

MK: You were saying how hard it was for your brothers especially, yeah, to deal with the

situation. I guess they had to change school, too. They had to change from 'Ewa to . . .

RY: Right. The two brothers that went to school had to be re-registered in town again. So I remember one of them saying, "No, no, I want to go back to 'Ewa School."

I said, "We can't go back. We can't go back, we don't live there anymore."

And so, I remember, we had to go and re-register them at Wai'alae, yeah, both of 'em at Wai'alae School.

MK: And you went to . . .

RY: And I went back to Kaimukī Intermediate School.

MK: And how did you folks feel about changing schools again?

RY: Well, the changing part, I guess, didn't affect us that much because then we got to see old friends, but then, at my age, there's a lot of questions. "Oh, how come you didn't come to school in the beginning, and now you're back again?" So a lot of questions went on.

I said, "I had to move back again." I didn't say that we got evacuated. I said, "We just moved back and so I have to come back to this school."

Of course, the Kawano children knew why we had to go back to the school. But then, the two boys [RY's brothers] said, "Oh, I got to see my friends again." So I guess the adjustment wasn't as bad as when we had gone to 'Ewa School, 'cause they got to see old friends again, and they got to meet classmates again, so that part, I guess, it wasn't that bad for the boys.

MK: And I was wondering, how come you didn't want to tell your classmates you were evacuated?

RY: I thought that was a real shameful thing that happened to us. I didn't know of anybody else in our neighborhood, in the Hind-Clarke Dairy, or at school, that I knew of that got evacuated. And I thought that it was something that we got punished for or that we got condemned for, and I just didn't want to tell anybody that we got evacuated. It was something that doesn't happen to an ordinary family. And I thought, gee, it was something like that we got picked on. I don't know, I had a real guilt feeling about that evacuation, as though we got picked on and it wasn't a normal thing, and that the rest of 'em were real lucky.

MK: And, you know, living in a small house with so many people, and people who are not your relatives, how were relations between your mom, your grandma and the Kawanos? How did things go?

RY: I felt sorry for Grandma, *Babachan*, because she kept blaming herself. Even after we moved, she kept telling me, "*Washi ga Nipponjin*" ("I'm a citizen of Japan"), you know. Already, you cannot convince her other than that, it is not her fault. I tried to tell her, everybody got out over there.

And I remembered the Zane family, and I think, I didn't know whether they got evacuated or what, but when my father said, "No, it's everybody."

I said, "*Bāchan, ano Shinajin no family mo deta kara*" ("Grandma, because that Chinese family left, too"). You know. It's not her fault, it's everybody.

But then, *Jichan* Kawano was there. *Jichan* Kawano was a good companion. I somehow did not know that *Jichan* Kawano lived there too. I thought he lived next door, somewhere else, and he came to visit us every day. Miyoko tells me, "No, *Jichan* Kawano lived there too." But he was such a quiet soul, and I remember, he used to always *opa* baby Eddie. And I remember, he would be puttering in the yard and he was good company for *Babachan*, because I could see *Babachan* getting real(ly) frustrated.

And my mother, being like that, and in those days, it was hard to be a daughter-in-law to someone, to an issei mother-in-law. And I could see that, as young as I was. Maybe it was a good thing that Mom wasn't talking too much or anything, 'cause—and when you talk to her, sometimes you wonder whether she heard you or she just looked through you. And I thought maybe it was a good thing because even if *Babachan* said something, she probably wasn't listening. But *Jichan* Kawano usually kept *Babachan* busy, talking to her and keeping her company. And I mentioned that and Miyoko did say, yeah, *Jichan* and *Babachan* turned out to be good companions, you know. They kept each other company and they had a world of their own, so that was good.

But now, Miyoko, no matter how stressful it was and how things, how bad things were, she always looked after my mom and Kenny. She always took care of them. And she would just tell me, she used to call me, "*Mi-chan*." [*Mi-chan* is short for Mitsue-*chan*.] She would always tell me, "*Mi-chan*, just watch your brothers, you help me with your brothers."

But it's hard because the other Kawano kids were all teenagers too. Of course, there were young ones like Tommy. The one above that would be, I think, the same age as Irwin. There was one almost same with Richard. But Nancy was the same age as I was, and one was same age as Helen, and the oldest son was same as my oldest sister. And naturally, at that age already, there would be squabblings going on. And it must have been hard for their parents too, 'cause arguments would come up because of our presence, and remarks would be made. And I would hear the remarks and I worry that, "I hope Mom didn't hear that. I hope Mom didn't hear that."

But you couldn't help it with that many people that there were times that Mom heard it. And Miyoko tells me she know Mom heard it because Mom would be crying. And she would have to comfort Mom and tell her, "Just ignore it. Susoe-*san*, just ignore it. Don't listen."

And she would take Mom away to her room. And I used to wonder why she would (always) take Mom to her room. And it was, I think, because something was going on and she just want Mom not to be exposed to that, so she would take her in her room.

So Miyoko did a lot for the family. And I tell, I even tell my sister, I think without Miyoko-*san*, I don't think Mom would have survived, or the baby. The baby was too sick and too weak. And that's why all my memory of his babyhood is that he was more on the brink of death than alive. But Miyoko just wouldn't let my mom give up. And the younger girls in the Kawano family, I guess because there was no baby other than Eddie, Kent was a baby, so they want to carry him, and they would always help, yeah.

MK: And then, you know, in terms of economic support for your family, how was your dad

managing to support the family? What was he doing during this time?

RY: It must have been hard because no matter what, even if he has the farm, there must have been a lot of restriction, limitation now. And so, what Dad did was, he worked on the farm and somebody told him that you could get stevedore job because all those ships coming in and everything. There was a great demand for stevedores, so Dad took a job.

(Visitor arrives. Taping stops, then resumes.)

RY: So what he did was take a job at night, doing stevedoring. But then, couple weeks later, when he came to visit Mom and us, we noticed he had pull down so much weight. He was real thin, and Mom started to, somehow, (even) in her condition, she realized that my dad was losing lot of weight, and she started to cry that he wasn't eating. That he just better come back over there. She just said, "Just leave the farm and come home to the Kawanos."

He said, "No, no." He said that he has a job.

But, in his condition, she cried. She said, "No, give up that job."

But he told her not to worry and that upsetted Mom again. And I remember, after that news, she(s) always in tears and telling me that, oh, how thin my father was and he's gonna get sick and what is she gonna do? And she told me to talk to Dad, but Dad said don't worry. Then the next time he came by, he said that, oh, he met a friend working at the stevedores too, and he has a apartment in one of those tenement houses (on) Fort Street. All those places had a lot of tenement houses and lot of the bachelors or families lived in there. Maybe just a little sink and one large room. Little tenement houses. And his friend told him, "Why don't you stay with me? Share the expenses and live with me."

So my dad moved out of the Japanese school. I told my dad, "Why don't you sleep on the farm during the day?"

But he said, "Oh no, no, no." He said there's no place to sleep and he's real afraid because the soldiers, with the rifle and bayonet, patrols all the farms. So he says, "I'm scared 'cause there's soldiers patrolling all the farm."

I said, "What do you mean, Dad?"

He said, "Oh, they're all over the farm, patrolling." So he said, no, he cannot sleep.

He moved out of the Japanese school, stayed with his friend (and) it got to be where he fed the livestock, early, and left the farm in the afternoon, went to the tenement house, where his friend was, and slept there, so he was able to now sleep, and share expenses, the cooking and everything, the food, with his friend. So he was eating more now, or (eating) better. And he was able to go to work. And so things started to work out better and he wasn't losing that much weight either because he was getting more food and more sleep. So I noticed when he came to tell us that, he was doing that, he looked much better and Mom felt better. And he kept that up until when he was able to find us a little house on this Bishop Estate land on Farmers Road. But that's, I remember, must have been about seven, eight, nine months that we stayed with (the Kawanos). Every chance he had, he was looking for a place.

My dad had this property in Kaimukī, on Twenty-first Avenue, he had a home there, but he needed to rent it out to make it pay for itself. And unfortunately, the person renting that house was a naval officer. And when he went to see the officer if he could ask him to vacate the house because (of) the family, he was told, because of the martial law, he could not evict or ask anybody to vacate a house that had military people or defense workers. The martial law was that strong. It protected the military people and defense workers over the civilians, no matter what the situation was.

MK: Could he have raised the rent on this officer?

RY: No. I remember there was rent control that went into effect or something. So he came back and told us that.

MK: And then, you know, the house that you had at Pu'uloa, was it still occupied by soldiers . . .

RY: Yes.

MK: . . . during those seven, eight months that you were at the Kawanos' house?

RY: Oh yeah. 'Cause I kept asking my dad, "Did the soldiers move out?"

And he says, "No, they're still living in it."

The boys had a pet dog. And we couldn't bring that dog with us, it was just too much. And Dad said no, leave him on the farm, when he goes there he'll feed and take care (of him).

But then the soldiers asked my dad if they could have the dog, 'cause they were feeding the dog and they were taking care of the dog. At least they took care of the dog, and played with the dog and they fed him well. And so my dad thought (it over). He said, "You folks can have the dog."

But naturally when the boys heard that, "Oh, Dad is so mean! Gave our dog away." And they started to cry, that they want to have the dog there.

And my mom said, "You cannot bring the dog here." It's enough that the humans were there, imposing on the Kawanos. No way you gonna bring a dog.

Oh, the boys thought that was so mean. "You just gave our dog to the soldiers."

But my dad thought that would be the best, since they were good to the dog. And he was being well cared for. And he even told me, "Oh, the dog is so well fed, he's really chubby and roly-poly." The dog was better off than us.

MK: And then, with your dad going to, you know, Pu'uloa every day, seeing the soldiers at the house and patrolling, did he ever say how he was treated by the soldiers or any . . .

RY: No. He told us, although he was afraid of them, he said they did not bother him. Some were friendly, they would talk to him and ask him about the farm, but other than that, they did not bother him, nor threaten him. But just their presence there with rifles was threatening enough, you know. So he said he was scared of them, but he said that he made sure that he didn't

antagonize them or anything. But he said they just left him alone. And he said some of them were nice.

MK: And all that time while they were living in the house, your dad could never get anything out of the house?

RY: No, no. No, he never, never set foot in that house again. From the time that we left, none of us ever set foot in that house again.

MK: And, you know, what happened to the other families, the other farmer families in Pu'uloa, at that time? What were their situations like?

RY: It was the same. Some of 'em who stayed at Honouliuli, I understand there was a relocation camp built with little houses, and my friend, Helene Kimura Minehira, said that her family was assigned a house. Some other families were assigned a house and they lived there. Each house had a alphabet and a number, she said she remembers. You know, maybe A-1 or B-2. It had numbers. And she said they all lived there. She said it was a small little house but at least, they stayed together. [See *Hawai'i Herald*, Vol. 15, No. 4 for more information on Helene Kimura Minehira.] And I always wondered why my dad did not get one of those houses for us. But then, it's too painful at this time to be bringing this kind of things up, so I just talked between my sisters. And I said it must be because Mom's condition and Kenny's condition, that it would have been of no help staying there, because he's not home, he's at the farm and he's working at night, stevedoring. So in case of emergency, there is no one available. There's no car, and where are we gonna go, rushing with the baby? And it must be that he must have thought it over that our chances were better at the Kawanos where we would have access to the Kawanos' help, in case baby needed to get to the hospital.

One time [recently], I did ask, "Dad, I understand there were homes there, and why is it that you didn't?"

"I don't know anything. I don't know anything about it."

So it seemed as though he wants to block out some things. And it (was) painful for me to bring things up because whenever I bring up those things---I said, "I need it for my [redress] statement, Dad."

"No, no. I don't know. I don't know."

So it must be his way of blocking things out. But it must be that it jogged his memory, because I see him crying.

MK: Thinking about it.

RY: Yeah, yeah. So then I told my sisters, "All right, I'll just rely on my memories." I said, "I think we better not bring too much of it up."

MK: And, you know, I know that you said the other families were in the same situation over there, they had to evacuate. Were there any families that were allowed to still stay in the area and . . .

RY: At that time, we didn't know who stayed back or who had to get out. And as I told you, the land area is so large and my dad tells me he don't dare go visiting to another lot, because he doesn't know whether the soldiers are keeping track where he went, who he visited. And I think that was everybody's fears, that they got kept track of, and you might endanger somebody else if you went to somebody else's home to talk, especially if you're Japanese. So he avoided that. So he said he never found out who got to stay behind, whether anybody lived there. But he did tell me, almost all of his neighbors and all the ones that he saw at the Japanese school, they went in at sunrise, and out by sundown, and back at the school [Honouliuli Japanese-language School]. 'Cause---and he would mention he remembers the Kimura family living [there], he said because they had three young girls. And he would mention another family that slept there. It must have been like a dormitory, everybody sleeps. But he said that it seemed as though almost all of them got out. I said, "By all of them, who do you mean?"

He says, "Well, I know all the Japanese family were sleeping with us at the school."

I said, "Well, what about the other nationalities?"

He said, "Oh, I don't know. I don't know where they slept."

So each don't know who got to stay behind or who lived there and didn't have to evacuate.

MK: I know earlier you mentioned that you told your grandmother, "No, no, *ano Shinajin no* [that Chinese] family," the *Shinajin no* family, the Zanes. Were they evacuated?

RY: My dad never found out whether they got evacuated. But then, when all this redress thing comes out, you would hear somebody else saying that, "Yeah, we used to see Walter Zane." But it's hard to say now, almost everything is hearsay and the principal person died. And somebody else who had another story, they passed away too. And it's just hearsay from their widows, so it's real hard. And we're told to be very careful when it's hearsay. So we couldn't say for sure.

MK: How about that beekeeper, the Caucasian beekeeper?

RY: Yeah, that's another thing. Somebody said that they saw this article about Mr. [Leo R.] Hannegan, and I got to read that thing, (dated in 1943) that---but there's no proof that he actually lived on his premises. We're trying to locate people who might know, but it seemed all the information we got is after the war. So he did help in the war effort where he produced wax for the military, and the honey, but whether to say actually that he was not evacuated, that's another matter.

MK: So when it comes to knowing about the other families, it's still kind of hard for you to know.

RY: Yeah. Because I had never gone back to that area. My dad could not remember. And like he said, he didn't dare go and visit other people with all the soldiers watching. And he felt that he would be endangering that person. Not unless they were out in the fields and they talked. But he said, in those days, he was really afraid to even stop by to talk to someone else, thinking that the soldiers might be thinking that they must be scheming or planning something. So he said he was real afraid, and he didn't want to cause any trouble for that person, so he avoided that. If there were any talking to do, I guess they did it at the school

when they met at night.

MK: And I think you mentioned that there was a Hoshide family . . .

RY: Oh yes.

MK: . . . that kind of helped out the farmers?

RY: Yes. It seemed Mr. and Mrs. [Yoshiaki] Hoshide had access to their home in the early part. And when you live at the Honouliuli Japanese School and in a remote area like 'Ewa and Pu'u'loa, there is not such a thing as you're gonna go to the restaurant to eat, or you're gonna pick up food there. There's no such thing. And Mr. and Mrs. Hoshide were nice enough, she would cook breakfast. Mr. Hoshide, it seemed, was able to get some supplies, so every chance he got, he got supplies. And they would cook breakfast at least. And knowing that my dad had no family with him, they fed my dad and they said there were a lot of bachelor boys, farmers, who were unmarried, who had property there, and they would feed them. My dad said, yeah, the Hoshides fed him breakfast.

MK: Was there a payment for the breakfast service or . . .

RY: That's what I (asked Dad). I said, "Dad, so how did you folks arrange that?"

He said, "No, the Hoshides never took any payment or anything. They just shared everything. They just helped and shared whatever they had."

I said, "Dad, weren't you supposed to pay?"

He said, "But they wouldn't take anything."

I said, "Oh."

So couple weeks ago, I got hold of some documents (for) the Hoshides. I came across some documents and not knowing whether they had it or they didn't have it, I made copies and whatever documents we had, I collected it all and put it in an envelope and I told my sister, "I won't be at the [Japanese American Citizens League redress] meeting, so would you please make sure and find out which is the Hoshide family and pass this envelope."

And would you believe it, Mr. Hoshide calls me to thank me. He said, "Oh, we didn't have anything, you know. We didn't even know there was such a document. Thank you so much."

So I told Mr. Hoshide, you know, "I remember what my father said, that you folks were so good to him, feeding him." I said, "It's just a little thing that I can do now for you."

He said, "No, no. Don't feel that way. We did it to help each other out."

I said, "Well, Mr. Hoshide. We're all in the same boat now, we have to help each other out. So, I'm trying to help you folks now."

So---and they wanted to make payment. I said, "No, no." I said, "Everybody has to help out, yeah. So whoever comes across anybody's, one of the farmers there, when we see the name,

we just get the copies for them in case they don't have it." So I said, "No, this is one means of helping each other out now. You folks helped my father, and I just want to do something for you folks." And they were so grateful.

MK: And then, I know that after seven---no, before I go into that, all this time, seven or eight months, living with the Kawanos, was your dad still paying for his farm and his land?

RY: My dad said that after that---no, the agreement was that within five years, the farmers would pay for it. And I asked my dad, "Did you make any kind of payment as you went along?"

And he said he doesn't remember. He said he may have made some payments, but he told me that he knew that he had to make all the final payment in 1945, and that's what the mortgage contract would be, that he has to pay in 1945. In other words, five years after he had signed that thing, that it was payable. But he said that he might have paid some initially when the house got built but other than that, he said he was—he didn't—he don't think he made any payment, because the farm was not paying off, now. Since they weren't fully established, they were all struggling. And by the time 1944 came by, when they got the eviction notice, formal eviction notice, he said everybody had to get out and he don't think that any payments—maybe some payments were made, but not the full amount, as agreed, because they were no longer there.

MK: Did he ever receive any compensation for his land loss or . . .

RY: No.

MK: . . . property loss?

RY: No. No. I said, "Dad, you have to think real good."

And he says, "No. I would've remembered that." He said, "I would've remembered that." He said, "No, we all took a loss." He said he don't think anybody got paid.

But I understand there were some families that might have gone through lawyers after the war and may have gotten some compensation, but my dad said he never got any. He said he's sure a lot of the farmers did not get compensated in any way.

MK: And then, after seven or eight months living with the Kawanos, what happened to your family?

RY: My dad finally found this small little house on [4561] Farmers Road and, would you believe it, one-half of it is where rich families lived in Kāhala. And the back half of it is farmers, you know, and poor people, like my dad, trying to find a house. And he found a house and so finally we were able to move there. But we had no furniture. My dad was able to (get some) appliance(s) and things were hard to come by. Everything went into the war effort. And he was able to find this small, cute, little icebox. But Mom says, "Oh, that's good enough. Just so baby's formula can be kept in there," and some of the fresh things. And he was able to find a stove.

So---oh, that was luxury already. And he said, well---and he was able to buy a secondhand sofa, the kind of sofa that you pull out and got to be a bed. So, oh, that was a---but nothing

else, nothing else. And so he was able to find some lumber, and I think it must be his friend, made a makeshift table. So we said, "That's good enough, just to put the food on." And we told the kids, "You just get your plate and just sit on the floor." And, oh, that was a big treat for them.

So, it was an empty house with no furniture or anything, but everybody was so happy. Mom really took a turnabout in her attitude, in her health, when she found out—of course, she knew he had a job and he wasn't losing weight, or he was getting enough sleep now, better sleep than what he was, anyway. And now he found a house. Oh, she was so happy. And I guess when she accepted that and felt so much better, the baby, baby Kent started to improve. So I think mother and child(s) ties are so strong, that baby must feel his mother is not well. Mother feels baby's not well. But I was so surprised and I thought to myself, that, oh, it's such a miracle. And that's the first time I ever thought about miracles happening. I said, "Wow, what a miracle." And on the second thought, I said, "Oh God is really,"—we're not a religious family. My family, my parents believe more in Buddhist. But some of us tended more to Christianity. But I really thought, oh there is a God who is taking care of us. And that was the first time I thought about miracles and that God really took care of Mom when I asked him to take care of Mom, you know. 'Cause she started to improve. Yeah, she really started to improve. And naturally, Kent started to improve.

MK: And your dad was still going back to Pu'uloa at that time?

RY: Dad still had to go to Pu'uloa. I remember, to save time, he said he would still stay at his friend's place, 'cause it's closer for him to get there, and closer for him to get to the stevedore at the waterfront, 'cause it's right there from Fort Street. So he asked my sister, my oldest sister to move in, to help take care of the family. So now, Gladys moved in with us, to help take care of the family. And Mom really started to improve quick. Can you imagine, an empty house, but yet she was able to really improve, healthwise and even mentally, you know. She would know that she's talking to you. She knows that we're there. And I would, in my own way, I would test Mom. Then Mom would answer, and I say, "Oh, Mom, you have to get well, Mom."

And she say, "Yes," and she would thank me for helping with the kids, you know.

And then I thought to myself, no, Mom didn't lose her mind. I was so afraid that either Mom's gonna die or her mind went already. And it's a good thing fifty years ago I didn't know what Miyoko told me later. I think I would have just gone to pieces, if I had known that at that time. But I was thankful that Miyoko was compassionate and kind enough to keep that news away from me. Yeah.

MK: You had so much responsibility at that time.

RY: But you know, most of it, Miyoko(-san did it).

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-46-5-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ruth Yamaguchi (RY)

August 3, 1992

Pearl City, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Ishibashi Yamaguchi at her home in Pearl City, O'ahu, on August 3, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, Mrs. Yamaguchi, we're gonna continue the interview, and you were at the point where you were telling me about the situation at 4561 Farmers Road. I think you had mentioned that you had moved into the house, had gotten some furniture and your sister Gladys moved in with the family.

RY: Yes.

MK: And what was your dad doing at that time?

RY: For a while, I remember he kept the same arrangement, because he was still working as a stevedore. So in order to get to the farm earlier, and to get back and get some rest and go to work, he kept the arrangement, knowing that my sister had moved back with us.

MK: And that meant that he was still living at his friend's place.

RY: At his friend's place in the tenement apartment, somewhere on Fort Street.

MK: And then, for yourself, that was 1943, you were sixteen years old, what happened to you?

RY: So, well, I think I mentioned that I was working part-time to stay with this family, taking care of these two boys, and going to school. And then the landlady of that court [where this family lived] mentioned that I could get a better job with the exchange system [Hawaiian Army Exchange] and there were openings now and they were hiring. But then, I thought about it and mentioned it to my family, my mom told me that I would have to give [RY's employer] at least some notice, for her to get some help for herself. So I did. [RY's employer] was very upset, but then she found someone to live in with her and to help take care of the children and her home. So I went to go apply for the job, thinking that I would get a part-time job and still be able to go to school. But when I got there, they told me that it was a full-time job, and they really wanted people to work full time. But then, I just didn't have time to think about it, or talk to my parents about it, what I should do. So I just made up my mind, all right, I'll be able to help them and I took the full-time job. And that's how I started my career with the exchange.

MK: And, you know, did your parents really need your help financially at that time?

RY: They did not stress anything how bad they were, or how financially tied they were, because the farm and having to rent the house. But from every indication, I thought that they must be having—they must be struggling. So I decided that I will help them out.

MK: What made you think that, you know, they were having a hard time?

RY: Well because I knew my father had that Farm Security [Administration] loan, and he had to make payments for that land. And knowing that even though we evacuated the farm, his farm was still there. He was still commuting, taking care of the livestock. Yet now, I knew he had rented that home on Farmers Road. I don't know how much the rent was at that time, but knowing that he had two different places to make payments, I really thought that they must be struggling, and plus my brother's medical bills. 'Cause in those days, I don't think anybody had any health insurance, so I knew he would have to pay the doctors and the hospital bills. So I just thought that it might be better to just go ahead and take the full-time job and help them out.

MK: And so, even though your family was evacuated, your dad was still making payments on the loan for the land?

RY: I took it that he was making payments, mm hm. Because I do know that it was under Farm Security [Administration], and I had heard them talk about that they had taken out a loan. And I knew he couldn't depend on the rental on the Twenty-first Avenue [home], because he was trying to make it pay for itself. And I knew he wasn't getting the money directly from that. He would be making the payments for that property.

MK: And how did you feel about, you know, working full-time and, in essence, stopping your schooling?

RY: I remember I had real mixed emotions about it, but after seeing Mom sick and how depressed she got, and knowing that I just couldn't concentrate on school. I found it real difficult to concentrate on school knowing the condition Mom was. And fortunately the boys were too young, and they were carefree. So I was happy that they weren't burdened with what went on too much. Of course, they knew, because they had to give up so much, too, of their childhood.

MK: And then, you know, like right now you said giving up parts of their childhood—can you kind of explain that?

RY: Well, like, I remember while staying with the Kawanos, they would ask for their toys, which we weren't able to get for them. My dad could not get the toys out of the house. And when they cried, you know, like why the cold bath, why they had to do so many things outside. Why they always had to wait to eat. Why was Mom busy with only the baby? And I felt that they had given up some of their childhood.

MK: And then I know that in 1944 your dad was told that he would have to leave his Pu'uloa land.

RY: Yeah.

MK: Tell me about that.

RY: In---well, he came home and said that he was trying to make arrangements to move the farm. And I wondered why, why would he want to move their farm when that farm was his. But then I found out that they were told they must evacuate permanently, off the land. And in those days, you just don't fight the government, especially if you're Japanese. You're so afraid. I thought that was real strange. If it's your land, why do you have to get off your land. But I'm sure the farmers, when they got the notice, they must have all went through the same feeling, why do we have to get off our own land?

I questioned my father about it, and I heard Mom ask him, "Why?" you know, "That's our farm."

But he said that they had notice from the government, they are gonna condemn the land. And in those days, you didn't understand what it meant when they condemned your land. How can they do that, you know? But there's nobody to fight for you, to stand for you. And I'm sure most of the farmers didn't have nowhere to go and ask why. My dad said all he knows is he has to move. So he was now busy coming home and making arrangements, and I know he was making a lot of trips, in and out. And I found out that he was negotiating to lease the land in Koko Head, which is now Hawai'i Kai. But not in the area where the lagoon is, it was on the opposite side, where Kamehameha School[s] had some land. And they were to lease the land from Kamehameha School[s]. And he was negotiating that, and when it was time to move, when he finally was able to lease the land, I think there were other farmers who was renting that land there, and now he was busy with the task of moving his livestock from the other end of the island to another end. And traffic in those days, most of it was occupied by military vehicles.

MK: How was he able to, you know, transport his livestock? You know, he had animals and how did he manage?

RY: Well, he still had his truck, and I think he had friends who also had trucks, and they were able to help. But I don't think they were able to do that kind of move in one day. It's not a matter of a day that we're talking about. I remember, he was kept busy for maybe a week. And everybody's busy with their farming, or with their work. You cannot just do the moving because you're just gonna move in a day or so. I remember he had friends helping, and it took days. 'Cause on the weekends, I remember, he would take some of my brothers, I guess, to probably help, just to watch the animals or something, or just to watch the gate. And they would go and help Dad. I remember it took days for them to do the moving. And if it was just gonna be on weekends, I would think it ran for several weekends to move.

MK: Would you know about the other Pu'uloa farmers? Were they in the same situation of having to leave their land and relocate?

RY: Oh yes. I understand all of them got the notice the same time, and they're to vacate the same time. I guess they must put a limit as to when the deadline was. But I'm sure most of them did not wait and they started to move out. Some, I found out, they had moved earlier, when they got evacuated anyway, and they had moved out earlier. But people like my dad and several others stayed until they got that notice.

MK: Did some of the Pu'uloa farmers relocate to the same area as your dad?

RY: I can't remember the same farmers being there. I know of another friend, but not of the same group. There were different farmers, but I don't know for sure if the other farmers from Pu'uloa moved. Because I've heard some of them moved somewhere else. Some of them who had chicken farms had moved somewhere else. But I think the Kamehameha [Schools] farmlands were leased out mostly to pig farmers, 'cause my dad mentioned certain people and they all had piggeries.

MK: And then, I know that, by then, the farm was moved to Koko Head side, and how about your house? You were living at Farmers Road at that time.

RY: We were still there. We were still there until---I remember, it was toward the end of 1944, and my dad got notice from the naval officer that he was being transferred out. And so Dad made sure that he wasn't going to rent the house to anybody now, because we needed it. So when the officer moved out, we were able to move into the house. I would say, probably at the very end or---I would---I thought it was the beginning of 1945, that we were able to move into that house on Twenty-first Avenue.

MK: And then, how long did you folks stay at that house?

RY: Oh, we stayed there until, way into the fifties.

MK: And then, at that point, I think you mentioned something about your dad having to move his farm and home again?

RY: Well, I remember now, when we---sometime in '45, he was able to rent the farmlands, I would say it's in 'Ō'ili Road. 'Ō'ili Road and Farmers Road ran into each other, I think, in those days. And I remember a friend of his had some farmland where they could move his piggery to that land. So he rented it out, and it was somewhere in 'Ō'ili Road, probably at the end of Farmers Road. He was able to move the farm. So now he was able to commute from Twenty-first Avenue, only few minutes down to 'Ō'ili Road. And by then, Mom was pretty well, she was getting healthier. And I think every now and then, she went to help Dad at that time. But then, Kent was still home until he started kindergarten. And my grandma was still there, so she was able to care more for Kenny too. 'Cause amazingly, Mom recovered and Kenny, although he was still small and sickly, he recovered, you know, which was amazing.

MK: So your family moved to the 'Ō'ili Road area?

RY: Oh, the farm.

MK: The farm . . .

RY: The farm.

MK: . . . was moved there. And your family home was still at . . .

RY: We were now living in 721---no, was it 708---708 Twenty-first Avenue, yeah. So then, my dad was there too. So we started to have a normal household. That was in '45. He had bought more secondhand furnitures, and so the home got furnished at least. And he never did mention anything about losing all those furnitures and everything. In fact, he never brought those things up. He just went and bought secondhand furnitures and started to furnish the

house slowly.

MK: And then, after the war, did the family leave that Twenty-first Avenue home and live elsewhere?

RY: No. In '45, when the war ended, we're still there, and Helen got married, so she had moved out. Then after Gladys got married, my dad decided to sell that home, because they were gonna move to a lease land at Koko Head that would be 'Ehukai Street. It was right across from Sandy Beach, and a lot of the farmers had moved into that area. And so they built a house, which I remember was—which I remember never got painted. He painted the inside, it was real nice. It was a large house, but he never got to paint the outside. And I found out, oh, all of the homes were that way. It was painted nicely in the inside, but not on the outside. But then, there were lots of farmers from Pu'uloa area that got in there. I can't remember all of them but I remember the chicken farm was the Yamadas from Pu'uloa, and they lived across from my family.

And each of the boys, in the meantime, started to go in the service. They volunteered. Richard was the first, then Irwin. Then that left two boys living at Koko Head. But eventually Tommy volunteered for the air force, then Kenny was the last one left. He was still attending University of Hawai'i, and he graduated in—I can't remember the year, but I remember he won a scholarship at one of the art institutes in New York. So he left on the scholarship and lived in New York. By then, Vietnam War was in full force, and Kent decided to volunteer. And I remember him writing to me that he had volunteered thinking that he would go to the front in Vietnam, but he ended up with an intelligence group. (Chuckles) Never got to Vietnam. And I think he stayed with the intelligence group all the while, until his time was up.

MK: And all this time your dad was farming at 'Ehukai?

RY: He was farming there. And he was still there when Kent came home. Now, Kent, after—oh, he was gonna get discharged from the army, and he had met this girl who was also working in the intelligence group. And he got married to Louise and they came home. And as I remember, he got discharged at Schofield [Barracks], I think. 'Cause I remember, I went to pick them up there. He came home and stayed with my parents for a while, until they moved out. Then for a while, there was no one at home until—oh, Grandma got sick. I think this was before Kent left for New York, 'cause he used to help my mother take care of her. But then Mom's health wasn't very good, after Kent left for New York, and she wasn't able to take care of Mom—Grandma. So my dad was forced to put her in a nursing home. And she passed away at 101 years old. But I remember—he said (when) she was 100 years old, the Japanese Consulate [General] honored her for being the oldest living female immigrant that year. I think either she was 100 or she had just made 101. She was honored. She had passed away, I think, before her 102-year-old birthday, Grandma passed away.

MK: And then, I know that you mentioned something about your father continued farming, and after that, he quit farming.

RY: By then, I think, Bishop [Estate], the lease was gonna be up, and all the farmers now had to move out again. 'Cause I think the lease was not gonna be renewed. And so, all of them had to find a place and move out. And by then, I guess my dad must have thought that it's time for him to give it up, because after setting up the farm, I remember they were stricken by—I

think the farmers, the pig farmers, were stricken one year by cholera. And a lot of 'em had taken a loss. I remember they had to hire vets to inoculate all of their livestock. And it's one of those things, I guess, when you have your own farming, that you go through. But by then, my dad, before that, had met his friend, Alec Napier [Alexander J. Napier, Jr.], who was the head of Kahuā Ranch. And so my dad took a job with him and ran the farm, with my mother's help, on part-time. Mom was well enough to help him. He took a job with Kahuā Ranch, and he was still able to do the farming, with Mom's help. But when the lease thing came up, where they were not able to renew the lease, at least he was able to give it up and had a job with Kahuā Ranch.

MK: What kind of work was he doing at Kahuā Ranch?

RY: He was doing mostly salesman's job, I think. Calling on different places and he would also help—he used to, I remember going to the slaughterhouse. He mentioned that he had gone to Honouliuli slaughterhouse with his boss. And in those days, I guess, you would do almost all kind of job. 'Cause sometimes I remember he mentioned that he would help in the cold storage. So I imagine it was all around job. I remember him saying that he used to go to different markets.

MK: And he retired in what year?

RY: He retired in, I think, in late seventies or early eighties. And he had officially retired, but they retained him, probably just as part-time, just twice a week or so.

MK: He worked a long time.

RY: So at the time that he was working for Kahuā and he had to give up their farm, one of my brothers had come home, so he decided to buy a home in Kāne'ohe, and that's still his home there, in Kāne'ohe.

MK: And for yourself, you had married in '49, and you had started your own family.

RY: Right. When I had my son, I quit work. Then I had my daughter. Then in early fifties, I think it was in 1953, we were able to buy this home. My husband [Harry Yamaguchi] was working at Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard], and we were able to buy this home, and my sister-in-law, who lived next door, was not able to go out to work, so she said she'll babysit my daughter. My son was in school. So we made arrangements that she would baby-sit and I went back to work for the exchange system again.

MK: And you retired in what year?

RY: I retired in '87.

MK: You know, I think earlier we talked about what you had said or not said to people you knew about your World War II experience. After the war, how much did you talk about, what had happened to your family?

RY: After the war, only a very few people knew. It was mostly my supervisors and strangely enough, all of my supervisors were Caucasian people. But they were one of the nicest people I have ever met. And all of my supervisors encouraged me to take different courses, where

the exchange started to offer different classes. And in fact, recently, my son wanted to get some old photos. And I kept this big large box full of different photos, although I had separated some of their childhood things, and I had started this family album. He wanted to go through that, so he had gone through it. And one day he came, he said, "Mom, look what I found."

I said, "What is it?" And it was a card certifying that I had attended an eight-week course at the University of Hawai'i. For eight weeks, each class---twice a week, for hour and a half, and I had completed that course. So it was---and I thought about it, I said, "Oh, yeah," you know, I had gone to those classes. And it was strange that he would find that card.

He said, "When did you go, Mom?"

I said, "Oh, that was through the exchange, we were enrolled in several different classes." And I remember the exchange had sent to us a Dale Carnegie course. So I was really grateful to all of my supervisors.

MK: So when you working for the exchange, what type of work were you doing?

RY: I started off with sales clerking. Then when I had---in the meantime, before I went on maternity leave, I had worked myself up as a manager of the exchange at [Fort] DeRussy. And I remember the officer who was in charge was a Major Cobb. He was a gruff man. His looks even told you how gruff he was, and everybody would be so frightened of him. But he was an officer when he found out that I would not be coming back after maternity leave, his secretary called me to be at one of the meetings---I'm pregnant, now, I would say about eight months---to be there at the meeting. And I wanted to know what is it about? I was told, "Just be there, [and] if you can't come, he's gonna send a car."

I said, "No, I'll be there."

And when I got there, I was awarded an army citation. He had arranged for that award. And I said, "Oh, my goodness." Me with my big tummy, you know, eight months pregnant. It was real strange. And another friend of mine, Frances Tsuruda, also got an award. He [Major Cobb] said he would hold the job open for me, but my husband was against it. So I had to tell him that, no, I won't be able to come back for a while.

So I received through the mail a letter of recommendation, that I can come back to the exchange anytime I wanted to.

MK: So when . . .

RY: And I was surprised that he had even sent me the letter. So with my experience with the military ousting us, and yet I got employment with the military, and there were so many benefits given to me through them. Like I say, all of 'em were Caucasians, and they were really, really nice. And so while attending, I mean, while working, I had gone to a lot of the evening classes that was available, either through the exchange, or through the department of education.

MK: And then as the years went by and you returned to work, what positions did you hold?

RY: Then I went back as a salesclerk now, because my husband was against being called evenings or having to stay longer hours, and as management, you would have to do that. And he was against that, and he protested so I said, "All right, I'll just take a salesclerk's job, where I put in eight hours and come home, and forget about it." So that was fine.

Then later, this buyer that I knew, a Mr. Kodama—oh! He had left the exchange to manage a corporation downtown, and he asked me to come and work for him. So I thought, well, it might be a good opportunity, and the pay was better. So I had left the exchange and went to work for the corporation. But unfortunately, within three years, Mr. Kodama died of cancer at an early age, I think he was in his late thirties. And he passed away. And the corporation was taken over by several different people. They were all nice, but the last one had come from the Mainland, and things were not the same any more. And so I decided to quit, and in the meantime, one of my good friends said, "Oh, come back to the exchange. There is an opening at the depot."

Now, the depot means it was a complex of several warehouses, and it was the central receiving and shipping department for the exchange. And she said, "It might be different, so why don't you take it."

So I went back again to the exchange, and Mr. Yoshida, Jack Yoshida, was nice enough to take me on. So I started in as a clerk-steno and administration clerk, and just stayed in the office after that. And I retired as an operation clerk.

MK: And then, all through those years, when, you know, you would get together with your coworkers or friends, did you ever talk about your wartime experiences and what had happened during those years?

RY: Later on, to my supervisors, I found it easier that I could talk to them, but I didn't elaborate anything, you know. They were surprised that the government had done such a thing. But then several times when I mentioned it, lot of people just didn't pay attention to you. Oh, no such thing went on. They were more aware of people being interned on the Mainland. Then a lot of stories came out, they were interned in the Sand Island, or at Honouliuli. The only ones that really was aware of, or listened to you, was people who had relatives whose family got interned. And strangely, my friend who called me to come back to the exchange, her father was interned, but he had died way before that [redress] law [Civil Liberties Act of 1988] got signed by President [Ronald] Reagan [in August, 1988]. And I felt real bad for her, that her father did not qualify.

MK: And, you know, your mom and dad, did they talk about what had happened during the war years, you know?

RY: That's the part, my parents if they talked anything, they must have talked among themselves, because in the later years, they never brought anything up. They didn't sound bitter about it, nor did they discuss anything, and if I remembered anything and I brought it up—we're able to now laugh about it. So I knew my mom had recovered from it, but she would never, not once did she ever brought up how hard it was or how much she had suffered. She only brought the whole thing up in referring to Kent. How much Miyoko had helped her, and without Miyoko she probably would not have survived. It was only on those terms she would bring it up, but not the day we left there, not the day that she got the bad news, or how much we had lost. She never brought that up. She just brought up only Kent and Miyoko, the

Kawanos helping.

MK: And I think you once mentioned that you noticed that in terms of your mom's behavior, your mom was still different after the war than in her prewar days.

RY: Mom, I noticed, was, as the years went by, in the, after war and maybe in the fifties, it wasn't anything, but I noticed somewhere around in the seventies, as she grew older, she got to be very insecure. I remember when I used to visit her in Kāne'ohe, she would love it when I would say, "Oh, come on Mom, let's go down to Longs [Drugs]," or, "Let's go to Times [Supermarket]."

And she says, "Oh yes, I need new slippers." Or, oh yes, she wants to see what they have. So she would go with me. And she used to enjoy that, going to Longs or going to Star Market.

And when the shopping mall came up in Kāne'ohe—"Oh, I'm gonna go to Sears. Mom, you want to go?"

"Oh yes."

But then, as the years went by, I noticed, no, she would make excuses. "No, no, no. I don't have anything to get."

I said, "Why Mom? You used to even, to look around."

I noticed she was starting to change, made every excuse. She didn't even want to go to Times [Super]market, which she used to love to do, because she would look for different *tsukemono* or different things that she didn't eat for long time. But she won't, she was no longer interested. And in the eighties, I noticed it even got worse where if my dad did not come home at the time that he said he would come home, she was busy calling everybody, "Is Dad there?" Or, "I wonder what's wrong, he's not home yet." And you could see, you could—from her tone of her voice and how worried she was. And she was getting to be real insecure. It got to a point that she was constantly calling people, "Dad's not home. I wonder if something happened."

And it . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: So you were mentioning that your mom, in her later years, did not feel comfortable venturing out too much.

RY: She hardly left the house. She would make all kind of excuses not to go with you. Even how much you coax her, that you came to pick her up, let's go. But then I noticed that if Dad was to go with us—there were some occasion we decide all right now, we're gonna have to tell her we're gonna go out to lunch. And if Dad was there, she would go. So we decided that,

okay, we take turns every now and then for the girls to pick them up, take them out to lunch, take her out. I noticed that if Dad was there, she was willing to go. But there was another side to it, if we stayed out a little bit too long, she would start making excuses to go home. We used to talk Dad into coming out, bringing her out. Few minutes later, "Oh, we have to go, we have to go." So it was, she was always in a hurry to get home.

I wonder if that was coming with her getting on with her years, getting older, or whether it had something to do with the evacuation we went through, 'cause she was never like that. And there were times that I would bring something up, she does not want to hear about it. If you had anything to do with wartime, she did not want to hear about it.

MK: What about your dad? How has he reacted to conversations about the war period?

RY: He more or less adjusted I guess. Because at one family gathering it was real strange. On the news, this demonstration, all the different colleges was having all kind of demonstration at the height of the Vietnam War. And that newsreel came on and there were several grandchildren, especially grandsons around. And out of the clear blue sky, I remember him—I was there when he brought up the subject that, oh, Grandpa had four sons who all volunteered for the service, "I hope none of my grandsons would go and demonstrate against the government like that."

And I thought that was real strange that he would bring it up and my son was there, my sister's two boys, and my brother's son. And I thought he referred to it more for the boys, although the demonstration going on had, were all coeds. But I thought that was real strange. But right at that moment, I thought to myself, oh, no matter what the military did to us, Dad did not hold anything against the U.S. government, when he came out with that. And I thought to myself, oh, my dad, all these years been very loyal to America, regardless of what they did. And I remember one time he did tell me that, he said, no matter what they did, he felt very fortunate they did not do anything to Grandma. She was an alien in the family, yet he felt very fortunate that they did not do anything to Grandma, because he heard of all these different stories, no matter how old they were, they were taken away and interned. And I thought to myself that he was really grateful they did not do anything to Grandma.

MK: And then, recently, with the possibility of farmers like your family, of getting redress, how has he reacted to this?

RY: That's another difficult part that I can't understand. When he heard about it, when I called him, "Dad, did you read the paper, did you hear the news?"

And he said he did. And one day, he came over, "What is this all about?"

And I told him that I had contacted JACL [Japanese American Citizens League] and talked to Bill Kaneko [attorney and JACL officer], that we may qualify. And I thought when I talked to Bill Kaneko, I made the phone call only on behalf of my dad, thinking that he would qualify. And Bill Kaneko says, "When did your mom die?"

I said, "My mom died in [October] '88."

And he said, "Your mom qualifies." [Although deceased RY's mother qualified for redress because her death occurred months after the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was enacted.] And he

says, "Anybody else in the family may qualify."

For a while, he was, he thought that was really something, that the government may have to pay us. But as each time I questioned him, his attitude changed. He didn't want to talk about it, he didn't remember, or when I bring certain things up, he seemed to ignore me. I told my sister, "He seems to be ignoring me, or he just wants to block things out." Each time I was filling in his forms and things, it got to be more difficult to work on this redress.

My dad won't say---and he would answer, "No, no." And when I look at him, his eyes are full of tears.

So I told my family, I'm having a difficult time with him. That either he's blocking it out, or his emotions are so mixed, that he's not going to say one way or the other. In 1940, I remember when he went to the Japanese consulate to cut off his dual citizenship, I remember he said, no, he's an American citizen, "I do not want to be a citizen of Japan. I was born an American." I remember him saying that's why he did it.

So now it's real hard to say which, what he's thinking on this whole thing.

MK: How about your own thought about the World War II experience and the situation now with redress?

RY: Sometimes I feel I can understand my father's part. But when our evacuation took place, I did not know at that time that it was mostly based on us being Japanese. But I do remember the officers questioning whether we were Japanese, whether Grandma was alien. And after that, everything got to be Japanese. In those days, nobody fought the government, nobody's gonna question or stand against the government. No matter even if you're Japanese, if you're born American Japanese, you're very loyal to America. I thought (about) my father, when he cut off his citizenship, saying that he's an American citizen. And yet I thought about people like my grandma, where, during the war, they were persons without a country. She did not belong to America, she did not belong to Japan. And I thought about that, and I could not help but feel so sorry for people like my grandma. Whether they went with Japan, it was wrong, whether they went with America, it was wrong for them. It must have been emotionally hard for them. And yet when I think about our situation, there were nobody to stand up for us. You didn't dare fight the government, you did what you were told. The only one in my family was my grandma, you know, saying that "*America-jin de den demo e*" ("As Americans, you needn't get out"). That only she should get out.

But in those days, you all had to get out if the government told you. It was not a case of standing up for your rights. And that's the difference I see now, from that time against now, where people stand up for their rights, even if they have to fight their government. And there are groups that will fight for you or stand up for you, but in those days there was nobody for us. In fact, like I told Bill Kaneko, people who were interned, everybody knew about them. But it seemed as though we were part of American history that happened, and yet unknown or forgotten. But to bring it up fifty years later, it hasn't been easy, because I guess for people my age, we really remember a lot of things. There's part of our childhood that we lost. And so it gets to be very difficult, so I can imagine for my dad how difficult it is every time I bring something up. And I find it real strange---and I even told my sisters, "I find it real strange that anything that happened before the evacuation, he seems to remember."

Like I missed Grandma's portion where she's telling me Grandpa worked for the dairy. But my father is saying, "Oh, she's probably meaning that she worked, they worked for Judge [Antonio] Perry who had owned the dairy land there." And his father was a caretaker for them, for Judge Perry's family. And they lived on his property. So he said, "In a way, Grandma is right, and in a way, it's not quite so that he had worked for Hind-Clarke Dairy. He had worked for Judge Perry, who had owned the dairy farm before Hind-Clarke Dairy took over."

I said, "Oh. But in a way, Grandma meant it that way and I misunderstood her."

So I got that part straightened out. And he said, yeah, they lived on Judge Perry's property. My older sister was born on that property. And when Grandpa Ishibashi built the home that we lived in, that we remember, he said, by then, he says, the Hind-Clarke Dairy had taken it over, bought it from Judge Perry, and Hind-Clarke Dairy, the owners, told my dad, "Since you're gonna work for us, we'll buy the home, and you stay rent-free."

As I remember, anybody who worked for Hind-Clarke Dairy, lived on their homestead, you did not pay rent. That was part of the benefits you got, that you stayed rent-free. So he could remember a lot of things. He remembered a lot of things that happened before we moved. And we were surprised, even to this day, he had remembered lot of things. He corrected me. And yet, when I question him about anything that happened after we got evacuated, a lot of things, even if he remembers, he won't tell me about it. He won't tell me about it. And it seemed as though he either blocks it out, or he finds the easiest way out, "No, I don't remember."

I noticed that I don't remember---got to be very common whenever I asked certain questions. Or either he blocks it out and says, "No, I don't know."

So it must be something---that period of time is very painful. And either he doesn't want to remember, or he doesn't want to talk about it. Every now and then, if I bring something up, he would say yes or no. But especially where, when I tell him things about Mom's part, where I remember, he just won't answer anymore, and I see tears in his eyes. So it's very painful for him, so I just drop it.

MK: I'm thankful that you've remembered and you're willing, talking about it.

RY: And so my sisters told me that---my sister Gladys was the one who says, "I think it's best not to bring it up anymore, 'cause he's not gonna remember, even if he knows, he's not gonna tell you. You're just gonna have to depend on your memory, and probably you remember the most anyway, whereas he's already blocked it out, his memory."

MK: I think I'm gonna stop the interview right here.

RY: Yeah, all right.

MK: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

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